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OLD CROSSFIRE;

OR,

THE TRAILERS OF THE EVERGLADES

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
98 WILLIAM STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1878, by
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OLD CROSSFIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MIXED RIDERS.

A MATCHLESS moonlight night in February, 1836.

On the summit of one of the loveliest hummocks in central Florida, and beneath the sweet blossoms of the magnolia tree, two figures stood upright.

The paucity of trees in front permitted their gaze to fall upon a plantation that stretched westward from the base of the rise. Upon the seemingly desolate building, the beautiful orange groves and the far trending fields, the soft light of a tropical moon fell with uninterrupted splendor, and lent a a witchery to the hour.

"Shall we go down without resting, boy?"

"Yes; I am eager to see the old place, and I want to see, too, what the hatchet and the firebrand have spared."

It was the clear voice of a boy that spoke, and a boy in look and stature the speaker seemed.

"Then we'll go down," replied his companion, a great, broad-shouldered, roughly made but handsome featured man. "When I passed this way last the Grants war happy, but now it is different. The Mixed Riders hev been here. You've heard of them, Frank?"

He looked down upon the youth as he uttered the last sentence; but no answer rewarded him.

Frank Nesbit seemed to be dreaming over the plantation that lay so silently in the moonlight.

"Frank, didn't you hear what I said?"

The boy started.

"Yes—yes, sir."

"Wal, why didn't you answer?"

"I was thinking about something."

"About the Grants?"

"If you must know, Sam—yes."

"Thinkin' won't bring 'em back to life," said the scout's husky, but kindly voice. "The boys what hev been here say that the Mixed Riders spared none. They came down on the plantation like a thunderbolt, when the family war at supper. They butchered the Hazels down on the Withlacooche the same night. Doc Webb an' his fellers saw three graves back o' the house, an' there sleeps the widow an' her girls."

"Her girls?" echoed the youth, manifesting some surprise. "She had but one child—Maggie."

"I know, but her niece, a girl named Maumee something, was visitin' at the plantation when the massacre took place. But, let's go down an' look at the place; we'll never get thar if we stand talkin' here."

The scout seized the long-barreled rifle that leaned against the magnolia, and a low and peculiar whistle fell from his lips.

A moment later, a large and gaunt Cuban bloodhound looked up into his face with an expression bordering on the human.

"We're goin', Tiger," said the scout, stroking the dog, and the descent of the hummock began. It was not difficult, and in a few moments the trio were walking across the desolate fields.

Presently they entered the proud magnolia grove, and passing through it, walked beneath majestic trees loaded with the orange—Florida's aureate fruit.

To the right of the last grove once stood the long row of buildings denominated the "negro quarters;" but now a line of blackened ruins marked their site, and told the story of the firebrand.

"The widow Grant was rich in slaves," said the scout, turning from the desolation; "but the Mixed Riders ran 'em off, an' the majority of 'em are helpin' Osceola now."

The mansion had not been surrendered to the tender mercies of the torch. It stood intact, but desolate. Flower-pots still crowned the long, green benches of the porch; but the

untrimmed vines were running away. The front door stood ajar, and pushing it open, the scout crossed the threshold. A flood of moonlight filled the room, and enabled the twain to note everything. Seemingly, not an article of furniture had been touched by the night riders, and the books still lay on the rich center table.

From the parlor the boy and his burly companion passed the scene of the Grant butchery—the dining-room.

There lay the table overturned, and a litter of broken dishes on the floor.

On portions of the china dark red stains were visible; they were marks of blood, and the washboarding was sprinkled with the same. Evidences of an Indian butchery could not be mistaken; but why should the fiends spare the house?

"It puzzles me," said the scout after a thorough examination of the room, "and when I think of the fellow who leads the Mixed Riders, it puzzles me the more."

"Who is he?" asked the youth. "Come, tell me about him. If it is a long story, we will not be molested here."

"When I have showed you the three graves, I will tell you about 'im," said the scout, starting toward the door. "Come, Frank, they're right out here. Some white chaps buried 'em, I s'pose."

They passed out into a small grove of young orange trees, and soon stood over the narrow mounds. At the head of each stood a picket, which had been torn from the neat white fence that once surrounded the mansion, and the mounds were covered with varied Southern flowers.

It was a beautiful resting-place for the butchered ones.

Frank Nesbit and Sam Thatcher, the scout, stood over the graves a long time speaking never a word. Tears crept from the boy's eyes and glistened on the flowers, and the long lashes of the sterner man—the old Indian fighter—trembled, as well.

The youth started from the sight suddenly, and laid his hand on the scout's arm.

"They shall not sleep unavenged!" he said, with determination. "Sam Thatcher, from this hour my whole life is to be but a record of vengeance. Now I am alone in the world. The fiends killed my father when they killed the

immortal Dade; now they have struck their second blow. Let me tell you. I am not ashamed to tell it, now that she is dead."

"Go on, boy."

"I loved Maggie Grant. My whole life was enveloped in hers, and but one short year ago she told me by actions that I might some day call her mine. There, I have told you. You may guess aright now, Sam, how terrible my revenge will be."

Without a word the scout took the boy's hand and pressing it warmly looked down into the depths of his glistening eyes.

"I am with you!" he said, at last. "We will hunt the Mixed Riders together, for this is their work. But their leader, remember, Frank—he is for me."

"Who is he?" exclaimed the youth, his curiosity greatly excited. "Tell me about him, Sam. We have seen the graves now."

For a moment the scout did not speak. He whistled for his dog, and waited for the animal to put in an appearance.

"Tige, I want you to hear about the biggest devil in Florida," he said, looking at the bloodhound crouched at his feet. "Though I have told you of 'im a thousand times, I want you to listen again."

Then he turned to the boy and resumed:

"Three months ago the Wilsons lived on the Ocklawaha. I used to eat their salt, and they welcomed me, God bless 'em. They were Tennesseeans, which, p'raps, made 'em so good. One night I war ridin' down the river to meet little Bertie Wilson at the Magnolia ford. It war a love matter like this: Tom McDowell war courtin' Bertie slyly, for old man Wilson didn't like 'im, though Tom war a good boy and I war doin' what I could for the couple. Tom war at San Augustine an' I used to be his mail carrier. That night I war bringin' a letter to Bertie from Tom; she allus waited for me at the ford. I found her there; she could not speak. A bullet was in her heart, that would beat no more for Tom, and some devil had scalped her.

"How I galloped to the house you may imagine, boy. The hounds had been there, too. John Wilson and his

family war dead, an' the old house was burnin' still. Back to the ford I went, and as I stooped for Bertie I heard a horse. Then I stepped back an' held my hands over my horse's nostrils, an' saw the butchers ride by. They were the Mixed Riders, an' the biggest devil in Florida rode at their head. I counted them, eleven—six maroons an' five Injuns. They went by like ghosts, an' when I could see 'em no longer, I dropped beside Bertie Wilson."

"And swore to avenge her death?" cried the youth.

"Yes! I swore to take his life and the lives of his men," answered the scout. "He is a Seminole, an' Spanish blood is in his veins. I never saw a prouder, better-lookin' feller in all my life, an' it's almost a pity to stop his wind. I wish you could see him, boy. They call 'im Morello. Half a dozen times I have drawn a bead on 'im, but some person who is bent on savin' his life has shot my rifle from my fingers. At other times some unseen hand has stolen my balls, an' emptied my powder-horn, an' I can't find out who's doin's it is."

"Somebody is watching over Morello," said the boy. "Some Indian love of his, perhaps."

"It may be," said Thatcher, thoughtfully; "but that protector had better never let me catch 'im!"

"We'll hunt together now," the youth replied. "You say that Morello led this onslaught?"

"He did; this is the kind o' work he delights in; he's ten times a bigger fiend than Osceola."

At this juncture the bloodhound started, and, with a faint growl, crept erect. He turned his head toward the ruined negro quarters and listened intently.

"Horses," whispered the scout. "They're comin' down the road, an' will pass by the house. Come, Frank."

He touched the youth's arm and they glided into the desolate mansion.

Presently they paused at the front window, and waited. The dog stood on his hind feet, with his fore ones resting on the painted sill—as eager to see as his masters.

Without, as I have said, the moon shone with undimmed luster, and the narrow road that ran before the house was plainly visible from the watchers' station.

They were not compelled to watch long for the horse. It came in sight and walked slowly down the road.

But it was the rider seated in the rich Spanish saddle that commanded attention. His figure and bearing proclaimed him a Seminole chief. His leggings, the color of which could not be observed, were heavily fringed; a loose *zapate* hung over his shoulders, and a plume consisting of three long feathers graced his head. His hair which appeared black as night, hung down his back, and touched the saddle robe.

Sam Thatcher started when he saw this handsome night rider, and clutched the boy's arm with a grip of steel. But he did not speak until six more spectral riders had passed the window.

"There, boy!" he said suddenly, "you have seen the Mixed Riders. You have looked upon Morello—the man who killed Bertie Wilson and Maggie Grant—the devil who is transformin' happy homes into spots of desolation."

"And the demon whose life we will have! His protecting angel will not save him now."

"No! no!" cried the scout. "The Mixed Riders are doomed."

"But you said there were eleven. I counted six besides Morello."

Thatcher laughed, and pointed to four deeply cut notches on the butt-ridge of his rifle.

"Sam Thatcher, or Old Crossfire as the soldiers call 'im, could tell you whar the other four be, but you can guess near enough. We'll go now."

"After the fiends?" asked the youth, eagerly.

"Yes; but—"

"Another horse!"

Tiger was growling at the window, and the boy's keen ears had caught the sound of hoofs.

"More night riders, I guess," murmured the scout, and then two horses came in sight.

The figures in the saddles were girlish in their outlines, and small hands held rifles across the pommels.

Undoubtedly they were trailing the Mixed Riders; but in front of the mansion they drew rein.

The eyes at the window watched them strangely, narrowly.

Would they dismount and enter the old house?

No; after a minute's halt they spoke to their horses and galloped away.

Without a word, Frank Nesbit looked up into the scout's face.

"What on earth can this mean?" ejaculated Thatcher at length. "Thar go the Mixed Riders, an' two girls followin' after 'em."

The youth started.

"Two girls you say, Sam?"

"Two girls," said the scout, firmly. "A girl never can ride as good as a boy. But, what war they followin' Morello for?"

"What do you follow him for?"

"His blood."

"Doubtless they seek it, too. He may have desolated their homes."

"Though he has, they shan't have it—I swear they shan't!" cried the scout springing from the window, excitement in his dark eyes. "I am goin' to cut eleven notches on my rifle's ridge! Come!"

A moment later the Grant mansion was tenantless again, and the avengers of blood, preceded by the Cuban bloodhound, were trailing the night riders.

CHAPTER II.

STARTLING PROCEEDINGS.

In the year 1832 the government determined to remove the Seminoles of Florida to lands west of the Mississippi, and in the spring of that year the treaty of Payne's Landing was held. In this treaty the tribes, represented by a number of prominent sachems, gave up all their reservations, and conditionally agreed to move. Subsequently, some of the chiefs made this agreement absolute; but the transaction was re-

garded by the Seminoles generally as unfair, cowardly and treacherous. Micanopy, the king of the nation, was influenced by the famous Osceola, a member of the bloodthirsty Red Sticks, and one of the fiercest Indian wars on record was inaugurated by a series of petty murders that aroused the sleeping vengeance of the government.

President Jackson was determined that the obstreperous Indians should be removed, and soon the bayonets of Federal soldiers glittered among the everglades of Florida. The winter of 1835 witnessed the massacre of Major Dade and his Spartan band, and the killing of General Thompson and his officers. These successes encouraged the red rebels, and served to augment their forces. Hundreds of rebellious Creeks and escaped slaves from the coast plantations, swore allegience to Osceola, or Powell, as he was called by the whites, and firebrand and hatchet held carnival among the beautiful plantations in the Land of Flowers.

The month of November 1835 witnessed the destruction of the Grant plantation, and during the first week in December, Bertie Wilson fell at the ford while waiting for her lover's letter.

With the foregoing brief epitome of the Florida war, and the perhaps necessary statement that follows, let us proceed with our story.

Shortly after passing the Grant mansion the Mixed Riders urged their steeds into a gallop, and sped away quite briskly toward the south. Their two mysterious followers did the same, and soon Old Crossfire and his companions lost the sound of hoofs.

"It's no use to foller 'em," the scout said, stopping suddenly in the narrow road. "They're ridin' like the wind But ef we had horses, boy; ef we had horses."

The need of horses was keenly felt by the twain, and after a brief conversation they wheeled to the left and gradually disappeared in a hummock.

The scout was well versed in Northern Indian warfare, but the cunning of the Seminoles sometimes baffled him. He had fought savages who invariably went afoot, but now he had to contend with those who seldom left the saddle—who could appear and disappear like ghosts. He possessed

a horse but at the hour of which we write, it was safely stabled in Fort King, thirty miles away. He often left it there when a cautious scout called him among the everglades. A few days prior to the opening of our romance he had encountered Frank Nesbit, who, despite the dangers of war was on his way to visit the Grants, unconscious of the work of the hatchet on that lovely plantation. The trapper offered to guide the youth thither, which offer was accepted, and the reader has witnessed the results of the journey.

From the meeting of boy and man in the forest, sprung a friendship as true as steel, as lasting as life.

The far-famed everglades of Florida are low tracts of land generally inundated with water, and interspersed with patches of high grass. Among them, however, spots of pineland, prairies and hummocks are occasionally found. These relieve the dreary scenery of the everglades, and are oases to the traveler who is bold enough to wade waist deep through the abode of venomous reptiles and desperate human fugitives. Of course I am speaking of Florida in "thirty-six."

Yet bridle-paths led through the fastnesses of the everglades, and the following of one would eventually lead the explorer to a hummock, or a patch of pine or magnolia land. These paths consisted of logs laid on the swampy ground, and were, therefore, dangerous trails.

One morning six and forty hours after the futile attempt of the scout and his companion to catch the Mixed Riders, a solitary figure was making its way across one of these evergladed hummocks. The rather gaudy dress of a Seminole robed his well-built frame, and the head-dress proclaimed that it had been robbed of its ornament. A mass of long black hair touched his waist, and the slender rifle which he trailed at his side, was a triumph of workmanship.

He walked rapidly, carefully noting his surroundings, and stepping cautiously among the broad magnolia leaves and pine burrs. He crossed the hummock which proved of no great extent, and ascended another, somewhat larger. Beneath a wide-spreading tree he paused, and a low whistle fell from his lips.

The next moment a girlish form glided from the dun

shades, and touched his arm. He started, but quickly put forth his hand, and drew the new-comer to him.

"Morello's beautiful flower blooms at his side once more," he said, with eagerness, and his lips kissed the white forehead. "He has walked a long way to meet her."

"Was my chief trailed?" The words were couched in an anxious tone, and the eyes of the girl darted a quick look toward the smaller hummock.

Below her eyes she wore a black mask, fringed with Spanish beads, and her right hand griped a rifle. She wore delicate leggings, and a short, close fitting hunting-frock, while a coon-skin cap, to the side of which was bound a wing feather of the king vulture, crowned her head.

"No, Morello was not trailed," the chief answered her, thanking her with his lustrous eyes for her fear. "He has not seen Osceola for several days, and the white hunter has not crossed his path. The Red Eagles hunt for Morello, the white man hunts for him—ah! is he not the fugitive of the everglades?"

The girl pressed his hand and looked up into his face a long time without speaking. It was a look of pitying love.

"Oh, chief, if this dreadful war was over!" she murmured. "Will it never end?"

"Perhaps never," he answered, and a flame lit up his dark eyes. "The Seminole wants to sleep in the land of his fathers. Does the Hidden Rose blame him for this?"

"No!" said the masked lips. "My people are unjust. The Seminole fights for his rights. Morello battles for his and for vengeance."

The fire which had died away suddenly came back to the chief's eyes.

"Yes, yes," he cried. "Morello fights for his rights and for vengeance! He is charged with crimes which he has never committed. This hand, Hidden Rose, never struck one of your people, it never will, save in self-defense. But it has struck the Red Stick; if Osceola comes within its sweep, let him beware! The hunted may slay the hunter."

The entire frame of the chief quivered with the workings of some hidden passion while he spoke, and when he finished, he turned suddenly upon the slender form at his side.

"Come deeper into the hummock, Hidden Rose," he said. "Morello wants to talk a long time. He may never see you again."

He lifted the masked one in his arms and started forward.

At that moment a form rose from the grass near the spot and looked at the pair.

The spy was Frank Nesbit, and Old Crossfire's bloodhound stood beside him.

"We'll catch the chief of the Mixed Riders now!" he ejaculated in tones of triumph, "and we'll rob some foolish girl of a lover at the same time. Crossfire will be delighted to know that Morello is so near. Why, the fellow has a good deal of white blood in his veins, and so handsome, too, he is!"

Then the youth followed the pair until he saw them seated at the foot of a magnolia, unsuspicious of danger, when he glided back.

Near the edge of the smallest hummock he came upon a burly form stretched upon the ground. It looked like some giant bear in the uncertain light; but when the boy laid his hand on one of the broad shoulders, there was motion in the mass, and a white face revealed itself.

The whispered name of the chief of the Mixed Riders brought Sam Thatcher to his feet, and he clutched the youth's arm tightly.

"Don't deceive me!" he cried. "What! Morello within our grasp and alone? Frank, it seems onpossible."

"Come, and call me a liar if we find him not," said the boy. "I was awake awhile ago and heard a footstep. I followed it, and saw him meet the masked girl."

Old Crossfire started forward excitedly; but with his well known caution, and Frank Nesbit guided him across the hummock.

"Look! yonder they are; now dub me a liar if you dare," the youth said, triumphantly pointing out the forms, standing now beneath the fragrant blossoms.

The scout shaded his eyes with his broad hands, and gazed a long time upon the chief and his masked adorer.

"You're right, boy; the Mixed Rider stands before us. Now for the deepest notch in my rifle's ridge."

The youth looked at the scout, but did not speak.

Slowly the great hand cocked the rifle, which as slowly crept to a level with the chief's breast.

"It's a pity to shoot him down like a dog!" the Indian-hunter said, glancing along the barrel, "but he served Bertie Wilson and Maggie Grant that away, an' what else should he expect from us?"

Still the boy spoke not; he watched the hunter's finger creep toward the trigger, and held his breath.

But, suddenly, the tableau was broken!

Morello started as if an enemy's footstep had fallen on his ears, and the next second he had seized the girl in his arms and was bounding through the little wood!

Old Crossfire lowered his rifle with an oath, and bounded forward.

He reached the tree when the crack of rifles made the hummock ring, and in the deadly flash he saw a dozen Indians. Quick as thought he raised his weapon, for the volley had left him unscathed, and the foremost fell before his unerring aim.

Then he turned and fled with the bloodhound at his heels.

He doubted not that the youth had already sought safety in flight; he did not see him lying motionless at the foot of a tree. The leader of the savages did, though, and jerked him from the ground.

"White boy lives!" he cried, triumphantly, holding the youth up to the gaze of the band.

A loud cry of joy greeted this intelligence.

"Another scalp for the Red Stick!" cried a chief. "Let the pale spawn die!"

But the captor held the boy at arms' length, and with fiendish glee in his dark eye, watched him gasp for breath.

Suddenly he turned upon his warriors.

"Where is Morello?" he asked.

The Indians stared blankly around.

"The traitor has lied! He said that Morello and his love were here."

"Tawarro's tongue is not forked," retorted a young Indian stepping before the chief. "He saw Morello here, and he talked to his hidden love. Tawarro led Osceola hither; but

they fly. Morello saw the pale-faces, p'raps, and run like the deer."

The tomahawk raised over the traitor's head, dropped bloodless at Osceola's side, and the red lips were bitten for vexation.

CHAPTER III.

OLD CROSSFIRE STOPS TWO HORSES.

"MORELLO and the Hidden Rose safe now; the Red Sticks follow not. Now will the hunted chief seek his braves, and turn hunter again. We must part here."

The Mixed Rider stood on the edge of a tiny savanna, several miles from the scenes of the foregoing chapter, and he looked into the eyes of the masked girl while he spoke.

"Does Morello think that Osceola trailed him to the hummock?" she asked.

"No; a traitor led him to the spot where Morello met his love," replied the chief. "When the traitor stands before the Mixed Rider again, he shall die."

"Does Morello know him?"

"He does! But the moon is creeping down the sky. We must part."

With a lover's privilege the chief raised the black mask and glued his lips to others fairer still.

A moment thus, then he kissed the white forehead, pressed a faultless hand, and turned away.

He walked down the edge of the barren, and gradually disappeared.

The girl watched him with deep solicitude, and remained in her tracks a long time.

For an hour or more Morello walked rapidly, and put many rods of tropical earth between him and the girl. He crossed an everglade and struck a narrow road leading from Fort King to Fort Jennings. He halted beneath a deformed oak, and was looking to the priming of his rifle when the sound of hoofs struck his ear

A horse was galloping down the road, and stepping back into the shade the Mixed Rider watched the new-comer.

Presently the Indian bolt upright in his saddle was visible, and the chief's eyes flashed fire as he raised his rifle.

A moment the sights covered the rider, then a jet of fire leaped from the little bore, and the horse dashed on, but riderless. For the rider had dropped the reins, and lay dead in the road.

A sharp and imperative "ho!" stopped the horse, and Morello caught the reins without trouble. Then leading the animal, he approached the stricken man, and looked down upon the painted face.

"Thus perishes the traitor," he muttered, sternly. "Thus all will die who seek to betray Morello into the talons of the Red Sticks!

Then picking up the dead Seminole's rifle, he mounted the horse and quickly disappeared.

He rode quite briskly for another hour, when he turned into a well-defined road and at last drew rein before the once beautiful mansion house of a plantation. It was now in ruins; but the huge chimneys were standing erect like ghosts, and swallows flew in and out with doleful cries.

He surveyed this scene for a minute in silence, and then put an ivory whistle to his lips. The peculiar call was answered by another in the direction of the half-burned negro quarters, and five horsemen advanced.

Morello counted them in a mournful tone, and greeted them with a faint smile.

The quintette consisted of three Indians and two maroons.

"Are you ready?" asked Morello.

"Yes," said the spokesman of the party, a burly, yet good natured negro. "We are ready to encounter the Red Sticks or to scalp the hunter who trails us. But, where is Tawarro? He left us shortly after our chief rode away. We thought he was with you."

Morello lifted the rifle from the saddle.

"Tawarro will ride with us no more," he said, significantly. "Here is his rifle."

The Mixed Riders looked at the weapon and then glanced at their leader.

"Did Osceola catch him?" asked the maroon.

"No; the subject who betrays his king dies.

That answer was enough; it told the Riders that one of their band had been shot as a traitor, and it is no wonder that they dropped their heads in silence.

"Come!" said Morello quickly and every head was raised, and every rein griped with sudden life.

Then the Spanish Indian wheeled his steed, and away dashed the Mixed Riders under a watery moon.

They kept in the narrow magnolia fringed road which skirted plantations over which the fury of an Indian war had swept like a besom of destruction. Desolated orange groves felled by the ax, noble mansions burned, and the bones of their owners bleaching near the blackened threshold.

Morello gazed about him as he rode along, and bit his lips till the red current of life trickled over his chin.

"The soldiers say that Morello's torch and hatchet did all this!" he said at last in an undertone. "He hates them, he hates the redder wolves of the everglades, too."

As he spoke a flame leaped over the trees far away.

"A fire!" ejaculated the negro, already mentioned. "The Red Sticks are at work."

Then Morello touched his horse with the Spanish spurs and like the wind six steeds flew toward the fire where doubtless the hatchet was doing its bloody work.

"Thar they go, Tige, six of the biggest fiends in Florida! They're goin' to help their brethern with the tomahawk They rode by so quickly that I had no time to draw a bead on the red Spaniard. But, never mind; I'll do it yet. I'm not followin' 'em for nothin'. Clinch will give me two hundred dollars for his scalp."

Sam Thatcher, or Old Crossfire, stood at the side of the road as he spoke, and the Mixed Riders were just disappearing not far away. Like specters they had dashed past him and his faithful dog, who was still growling at the flying shadows.

The scout had reached that spot in his flight from the hummock; but without the boy, Frank Nesbit. He believed that the youth had fled, and that he was wandering about among the everglades, searching for the road by which they

had entered. It was at the head of this road that the scout stood, and there he had waited four hours for his *protege*. The night was waning; according to time, the day had already appeared; but the light of the sun still remained away. Sam did not want to leave the youth alone among the Indian infested everglades and hummocks, and it was with pain and reluctance that he admitted that he was compelled to quit his station.

Before doing this he drew a piece of paper from his pocket, and rudely traced with a bullet these words thereon:

"Come to the Grant house to-morrow night. Turn to the right here and keep down the road till you see it.

"SAM THATCHER."

He fastened the paper in a conspicuous place against a leaning magnolia, and read the writing several times aloud before he turned away.

"I'll go and look at Bertie's grave," he said, moving off. "No; I'll go to the fire. Guess it isn't more'n four miles off, an' mebbe I can get to settle acounts with the Mixed Riders."

Into a dog trot he increased his gait, and "Tige," wondering no doubt what occasioned his master's speed, followed at his heels. But suddenly the dog stopped with a low growl.

"Tige, what is it?" said the scout halting, and looking up the road.

The dog glanced up into his face, and moved toward the trees.

"Horses, by Tampa!" ejaculated Old Crossfire, following Tiger's example, and a moment later dog and master were waiting in the shadows for the approaching steeds, which were coming down the road in a smart gallop.

Two horses loomed up between the scout and setting moon, and then he caught sight of their riders.

"It's them blasted girls we saw followin' the Mixed Riders the other night!" he exclaimed, as if addressing a human being. "An' I b'lieve that the near one is the same one what war holdin' a love talk with Morello down in the hummock, a while back. By Tampa! it is the same! She's got that black thing on her face yet. Now, Tige, we'll show

'em a trick. I'll stop the near horse an' you halt the other. You know how it's done, old fellar. Zip, Tige! *zip!*"

The bloodhound planted himself for a spring, and with dilated eyes watched the riders.

He knew his duty.

Suddenly, with a low command to his dog, Sam Thatcher sprung from the shadows, and seized the reins of the nearest horse. Tiger leaped past him and seized those of the other with his teeth.

The steeds were forced back upon their haunches, but their riders stuck to the saddle like true horsemen. But, exclamations of surprise broke from their lips.

"Give an account of yourself!" commanded the scout, holding to the reins. "I want you to tell me who you are, an' why you meet the biggest devil in the everglades alone an' at night."

He addressed his last words to the slender form that occupied the saddle above him; but whose face he could not see for the black mask that hid it below the eyes.

"What is it to you if I do meet my lover?" cried the unseen lips in a defiant tone.

"And a pretty lover he is, too!" hissed the scout. "A murderer, a house-burner!—worse nor all this he is, for he slays women."

"Beware, Crossfire!" said the girl, in a warning voice. "You can go too far with me. Who did he slay?"

"Bertie Wilson an' the Grant girls."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Yes, I've buried one, an' stood over the graves of the others."

"He never touched them!"

"Ah! you can't clear your rascal's skirts, girl!" cried the scout, with a smile. "I am huntin' 'im, an' I'll find 'im, too."

"Beware! For each drop of his blood shed by you, ten—ay twenty drops of yours will be shed."

The words hissed so bitterly, so vengefully through the mask, started Old Crossfire and he cried:

"Then it's war to the knife, girl. Must I hunt you, too."

"If you hunt him—yes. But, let me tell you that his hands are clean of our people's blood."

"That won't do! Didn't he an' his infernal band ride by me when I knelt by Bertie Wilson's corpse, an' hadn't they scalps and booty on their saddles? Girl, you can't clear 'im. Now I'll see who you are."

With the last word on his lips he leaped from the ground and before the unknown could interpose a hand he tore the black mask from her face.

"Great heavens! I thought—"

He never finished the sentence, for the horse sprung forward like a shaft from a catapult, and he was dashed from the road!

The next instant the two mysterious night riders were far away!

After a while Old Crossfire rose to his feet and looked at the mask which he held in his hand.

"Tige, this beats Satan himself," he said, and then he started toward the dog who had dropped something at his feet.

"What! Tige, did you tear the cloth from the other 'n's face? Well, well, you're a human dog! Tell me what she looked like!"

Tiger looked up into his master's face as though he wanted to speak.

"I don't believe it! I don't believe it!" ejaculated the scout, suddenly. "I swear I don't!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLANTER'S SON.

THE two horses finding themselves free, sped down the moonlit road like a brace of arrows, bearing their unmasked riders on their backs.

The light of the distant fire was momentarily growing brighter, and it was evident that the score or so of

buildings attached to some extensive plantation were in flames.

Toward the fire the Mixed Riders had ridden, and now toward it, as well, the mysterious twain were urging their steeds.

Let us, therefore, precede their arrival, and witness the swoop of the red birds of prey.

Not far from a lucent stream that poured its sparkling waters into the Ocklawaha, stood the mansion of a plantation. The usual row of negro quarters stretched to the left; but they were silent. The song of the rice and indigo fields was stilled, and the banjo stirred not the warm air with its happy strains. There were signs of life about the mansion; but none whatever around the home of the slave. The gray-haired planter with his family sat beneath the vine-covered roof of a long veranda that looked toward the stream I have mentioned. He felt secure with the Indian war about him. When his slaves ran off to join their fortunes with the Seminoles, he made no attempt to reclaim them, nor had he, in single instance, offered aid and comfort to the government.

Baptiste Jardin, the French creole, had preferred neutrality to partisanship.

His wife, a comely matron of five and forty, sat at his side, and his son leaned against one of the columns that supported the porch.

Pascal was the planter's only child. His age was two and twenty, and his features were very handsome. His voice was melodious to perfection; it was a delight to hear him speak. But there lurked in his dark eye the nature of the lion. A lamb in peace, Pascal Jardin, the young French creole, could be a tiger in time of war.

As he stood on the edge of the porch a troubled expression rested on his face—an expression which found its counterpart on the face of his father.

"Our safety demands a continuance of our neutrality," said the planter, breaking the silence which had been prolonged. "You are imperiling our lives by your hot words."

Baptiste Jardin was in no good humor, as the tartness of his tone attested.

"Father," and the son turned slowly around, "a man of your age should know something of a Seminole's word. Haven't they broken their promises to us, time and again? Osceola swore that our cattle should not be run off. Where are they now?"

"The Mixed Riders did that."

"The Red Sticks, father!" replied the son, calmly. "The savage is treacherous; it is his nature and I blame him not. He is murdering those whom he swore should not be harmed. Last night we saw the light of M. Rochfort's house."

"The Mixed Riders were there."

The youth colored.

"I know that they were *not*," he said, somewhat angrily. "But this morning I rode over to the ruins and found—what? A Red Stick's hatchet. That told the tale, and proclaimed, beyond cavil, the identity of the butchers."

The planter rose to his feet and looked at his son.

"Your mother says that you have announced your intention of taking up arms against the Indians, if I maintained my present position."

"I did," said Pascal calmly.

"And I shall maintain my neutrality!" was the planter's decision.

"Then I go. You will not refuse me grandfather's sword?"

"Take it and wield it against the men who are fighting for their rights."

The youth walked between his parents and entered the house. He ascended the broad steps to a small room—the armory of the plantation, for the Florida planters were prepared to arm their slaves in case of an Indian attack.

"I'll go!" he said firmly. "The Americans need strong arms now. I will assert my manhood and help them."

From the collection of fire-arms that filled the corners of the armory he selected a hunter's rifle, already loaded. Then he buckled on a sword—a sword which his grandfather, Marshal Jardin, had worn in the wars of the First Empire, and turned to descend.

At that moment the reports of a dozen rifles fell upon his ears, and cries of pain quickly followed.

With pallid face the young planter bounded to the window that overlooked the porch, and threw up the sash.

Dark forms, armed and plumed, were rushing through the gate that fronted the mansion. The treachery of the Indian had sprung to the surface.

Pascal Jardin took in all in a second of time, and threw the rifle to his shoulder. A sharp crack followed, and a Seminole staggered from the attacking party—dead! Th savages paused a moment and looked up at the window. It proved a fatal moment for them, for the youth having snatched a musket from the heap of arms, sent a second foeman to the never ending trail of death.

Then with a yell, the fiends rushed forward, passed the bodies of the planter and his wife on the porch, and swarmed up the stairway.

They were met by a charge of buckshot, and the foremost fell against their more protected comrades; but they pushed on, knowing that but one man opposed their advance.

Pascal Jardin with the thought of his murdered parents lying below, fought with the desperate vengeance of the whelp-robbed tigress. He clubbed his rifle, but it was wrenched from his hands, and then he had recourse to his grandsire's sword.

Bloody work that war-honored steel performed during the next minute; but the brave youth was driven back. He retreated to a window that looked upon the orange grove in the rear of the mansion—a window thirty feet from the ground. One blow with the sword served to shatter the sash, and the next moment he had sprung from the room.

The Indians rushed to the window expecting no doubt to see a maimed man on the ground below; but they were disappointed—the young planter had escaped!

Then the work of destruction began. The armory was sacked, and the weapons borne to the lawn in front of the house. Too late Baptiste Jardin had received a practical demonstration of the treachery of the Indians. He was carried from the porch and laid beside his scalpless partner. The first volley had slain both.

The rich furniture of the mansion was collected in the parlor and the torch applied to it. Then the marauders with-

drew to watch the progress of their work, and the four savages slain by Pascal Jardin at the top of the stairs were taken from the house. Presently the flames leaped from the gothic windows, and in a little while the entire mansion was wrapped in fire. The torch was borne to the slave quarters, and the great light that leaped skyward and paled the morning star was the one which attracted the attention of other characters of our story.

With the exception of four maroons or runaway slaves, the bloody band was composed of Seminole Indians.

The leader was a young chief strikingly handsome and strong in authority. The glancing of his dark eye was a command, to disobey which was death.

He stood before the burning mansion with folded arms, while his braves moved about destroying the beautiful orange trees with their tomahawks. The Indians seemed to harbor some special hatred against the Jardins.

At last the work of destruction seemed complete, and the savages gathered around their chief.

He looked down upon the dead warriors, and counted them inaudibly, though his lips were seen to move.

"He who throws the pale planter's scalp at my feet shall become a chief!" he said looking up suddenly. "Powell has spoken."

A minute later a number of horses were led to the lawn, and the marauders began to mount with their booty. The dead braves were hurriedly lashed to their saddles, and the Creole's weapons secured.

"Now, Red Sticks, back to the war-trail!" said the young chief, and the party moved away.

But, suddenly, a volley was poured from the road, and several saddles were emptied. The dead braves sitting upright were pierced through and through.

A loud cry pealed from the lips of the Red Stick chief and glancing over his shoulder he struck his steed with the needle-pointed spurs and dashed away. His band followed, and a moment later six horsemen darted across the lawn in swift and vengeful pursuit!

Both parties were soon lost in the gloom that lay beyond the light of the burning building, and after a time a solitary

figure glided through the orange grove. It owned the shape of the human form, and when the light fell upon it Pascal Jardin stood revealed. He was returning to his desolated home.

As the savages had offered no pursuit, perhaps he had not fled far; his return seemed to justify such a supposition.

He was armed with a musket, and he examined the vicinity of the house before advancing far into the firelight.

On the lawn he dropped beside his parents, and remained there in silence a long time. At last, without a word, he rose and found a spade which the flames had spared. To the orange grove he bore the bodies and dug a grave there.

During his labors he uttered no audible words; he heard nothing—not even the footsteps of the persons approaching to disturb and to start him.

The first warning he received of the presence of others was the touch of a hand.

Dropping the spade, he started toward the musket, and clutched it before he noted the intruder.

"'Tis I, Pascal!" said the girlish figure that advanced with uplifted hand. "You are not afraid of me?"

He started forward with a cry of astonishment, and caught the white hand.

"Afraid of you? No, girl! But where is—"

"Here!" interrupted a voice, and a second form clad exactly like the first stepped from the shadows.

Pascal took the hand she extended.

"Where are your masks?" he asked, looking with surprise into the faces before him.

"We left them down the road," answered one glancing at her companion with a faint smile, and then she resumed in a sadder tone. "The fiends have been here."

"Yes," grated the young planter, "and in the burial just performed I have unchained the demon of vengeance."

"You will join the Mixed Riders now?" cried one of the twain with a sign of hopeful joy. "You can take their oath, for you have been deeply wronged."

Pascal Jardin hesitated.

"If you love me, and wish for vengeance for this night's work, join the Mixed Riders!" said the fair girl sternly.

"I will, if their chief will take me!"

"Tell him that the White Blossom sent you."

"You are mysteries to me," said the youth, stepping toward the twain. "Why do you follow the Mixed Riders? Tell me. The hand of every white and red-man in Florida is raised against them. Would you drive me into their depleted ranks that mine may be a speedy death? Speak!"

"I have spoken, Pascal Jardin," replied the first speaker, sternly. "If you love me, join the Mixed Riders! Hark! they come! Look! they are on the lawn. Now prove your love, and fulfill the oath of vengeance. Go!"

She pointed to dark forms on the burned grass of the once beautiful lawn, and the next moment the youth found himself alone. The strange riders had vanished like specters.

Pascal Jardin looked at the figures on the lawn, and hesitated; and while he did this, he heard two horses gallop through the orange grove.

"The girl I love is a mystery, and so is her companion," he murmured listening to the hoofs. "The Mixed Riders are doomed: but I will obey her. Come weal or woe, I will unite my fortunes with Morello's."

CHAPTER V.

DANGEROUS QUARTERS.

We left Frank Nesbit, the scout's *protege*, gasping in the hands of Osceola, and now we will return to him.

The youth was in the act of following Old Crossfire in his pursuit of Morello, when the volley that suddenly terminated his calculations, was poured from the darker recesses of the hummock. It was evident that the Indians had fired at random, for, as the reader has seen, the big hunter escaped unhurt. Our young hero, less fortunate, stopped suddenly, and then sunk at the foot of a tree, without a groan.

Osceola at first thought that our hero had received a death wound; but a brief examination served to convince him to

the contrary The Red Stick bullet had drawn blood from the veins of the left temple, and beyond rendering the victim for a while senseless, it did no further harm. The chief smiled when he noticed this, and his warriors gathered around to watch the return of consciousness.

What would Osceola do with his captive?

The interrogative was written on the circle of swarthy faces.

"Kill him! kill him!" cried several braves. "His people trail the Seminoles through the everglades; they hunt them beside the streams, and they would drive them beyond the great river in the west."

"No!" said Osceola firmly, after listening several minutes to the fiery words of his blood-thirsty followers. "The pale boy is Osceola's captive; he will deal with him as he thinks best."

That settled the question for the present; the chagrined warriors returned their knives and hatchets to their belts and stepped back.

Among the warlike red and black men of Florida, Osceola, or Powell, as he was called by the whites, was truly a king. And his word, his look, was law.

The Red Stick slain by Old Crossfire was left to sleep death's long cycle where he had fallen, and the remainder of the band mounted and rode away. Osceola was morose and sullen, speaking not. He held Frank Nesbit on the horse before him, and led the van of his troop with watchful eyes. By and by he drew rein, and turned to his band.

"Osceola turns to the right here," he said. "The Red Sticks will ride down to the cypress ford. When the morning star shines on the water there Osceola will join them. Then we will descend upon the creole whose hot-headed son talks of war."

Not one of the braves replied to the chieftain's words; they resumed the reins, and rode on toward the north.

Osceola watched them awhile, and then turned to the left with his charge.

Then for the first time he spoke directly to the youth who had entirely recovered from the effects of the shot. He asked him concerning his parentage, and uttered a strange ejaculation when the fate of Frank's father was told.

"Brave men with Dade!" said the chief. "Osceola was there."

The youth shuddered. Perhaps his captor had directed the fatal bullet to his father's heart.

Concerning the scout's mission to the hummock our hero was reticent, and Osceola did not press him for replies. The chief seemed to fear Old Crossfire while he praised his bravery and cunning. He said but little about the chief of the Mixed Riders; but the boy learned enough to know that the two chiefs were bitter enemies, and that a traitor had guided Osceola to the scene of the conference.

Deeper and deeper into the everglades the Seminole king went. Sometimes the horse would tread solid ground, at other times sink to his knees in the ooze and slime of a swamp.

Suddenly the chief came upon a hummock, and the outlines of a hut appeared. It was a small structure, and no signs of life were visible about it. But as the twain advanced a gaunt bulldog made his appearance, and showed his teeth with signs of delight. The words with which Osceola greeted the brute drew two persons from the hut—a young Indian warrior and a Seminole girl.

"Well, I'm back again," said the chief, dismounting and lifting the youth from the saddle as though he were a little child. "In the woods I caught a white bird Come, look at him, Capta; and you, too, Hawisho. Tell me, both of you, what you think of him."

The warrior approached boldly, and stepped before the captive. Then folding his arms on his, as yet, unscarred chest, he scrutinized him from head to foot with his dark eyes. Capta, the Indian girl, on the contrary remained in her tracks, and bent her soft gaze on the boy. Osceola looked on without a word.

"Boy big enough to kill Indians," said Hawisho at length, turning to Osceola.

A faint smile came to the lips of the Seminole king, and his gaze wandered to Capta.

"Hawisho has spoken, and his voice is the voice of one who hates his enemies. What does Capta think of the captive?"

The girl blushed, and her gaze sunk beneath the chieftain's eyes.

"He is pretty; he is old enough to love," she murmured scarce above a faint whisper.

It was the language of the heart.

The smile grew broader on Osceola's face, and Hawisho's countenance was covered with a cloud.

Hawisho was a handsome brave; but signs of passion lurked in his eyes. Capta was very beautiful in her simple Indian dress, and the long black locks that touched her waist.

"Hawisho thinks of death, Capta of love," Osceola said after a long pause. "The pale boy has come to dwell in Capta's hut. Osceola spares his life because his father was a brave man—because he could die with Dade like a great warrior. He will keep Capta company while Osceola and Hawisho are away.'

"Hawisho is going to guard Capta," said the young warrior quickly, and with rising spleen. "He loves the Red Rose of the everglades. Osceola knows this."

"But he says that Hawisho must not remain here always. The pale soldiers hunt Osceola, and the young Seminole must be with him."

This was displeasing to the scarlet lover; but he curbed his rising anger.

"Hawisho is true to Osceola; he will stand by him through thick and thin," he said.

The chief smiled, and looked at his captive.

"You must stay with Capta till Osceola comes again. He is going away now—going to the cypress ford to meet the Red Eagles. Capta, your father mourns for you."

An expression of sorrow came to the girl's face, and she started toward the Seminole king.

"Does Caloochie live?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then Capta stay away from her father's lodge. Make the old chief believe that his daughter still lives; but tell him not where she dwells."

Osceola nodded, and vaulted into the saddle.

"Hawisho will stay here till Osceola calls him," he said

looking at the young warrior. "He will watch the pale boy with Capta. Good-by."

Then the horse's head was turned to the west, and Osceola rode away in the shadows.

He joined his band at the ford, and led them to the attack on the French creole's mansion, which the reader has already witnessed.

Frank Nesbit watched the chief till his form had disappeared. Nor did he turn away then; but would have stood there gazing into the everglade shadows until the breaking of day had not Capta's hand fallen on his arm.

"Pale boy hungry," she said in a sweet voice. "Capta got good food in the lodge. Come in and eat."

The youth started and turned upon the beautiful girl standing so near. A few steps away, caressing the gaunt dog, was Hawisho, a forced smile on his lips, but evil in his eye. Once or twice he looked through his long lashes at the pair, and scowled; and when Capta led our young hero into the hut he bit his lips and muttered a malediction.

Frank ate heartily of the venison and quail which Capta set before him on a cloth spread on the ground, and took long draughts of the cool water that filled a gourd. The girl sat near him and talked while he ate.

He learned enough of her history to know that she was a runaway girl, and the daughter of Micanopy the aged chief of the Florida nations. Aided by Osceola, she had fled from the royal lodge, better contented to dwell alone among the everglades than in the Seminole city as the wife of a chief whom she did not love. Osceola had a wife of his own; he loved Capta because of her persecutions, and he had erected the hiding-place among the everglades. He led Hawisho to the spot, believing that Capta would love him, knowing that he could trust the young warrior with the secret of her retreat.

During the meal Hawisho remained outside teasing the dog.

When he entered the hut, Capta was making a couch of skins in one corner of the little room, and he watched her with strange interest.

"Pale boy sleep well on wolf-skins," she said at last, finishing the bed. "He is tired and weak. Let him go to sleep now."

Thanking the Indian girl for her kindness, our adventurer laid down on the couch, and thought of his novel situation. He saw Capta and her lover standing in the door, and heard their murmurs of conversation.

"No cords needed," he heard the girl say. "He will not run off."

He was about to assure her that the confidence which she had imposed in him should not be abused, when the pair moved away, leaving the dog lying across the threshold, for they did not even shut the door.

Their steps soon died away, and then the boy, really fatigued, closed his eyes and fell asleep.

And while he slumbered the moon rose higher, and her ambient light, streaming into the hut, bathed the couch in beauty.

By and by a dark figure approached the door, and the dog raised his head. But a moment later he dropped it again, and allowed the figure to advance unchallenged. Across the threshold the dark, half naked Indian form crept, and the gleaming object in his right hand was the bright blade of a knife.

Straight toward the sleeping boy he crawled, and at last bent over him.

Then the moonlight fell on the face of the red-man, and the jealously vengeful features of Hawisho were revealed.

He believed that Osceola had guided a rival to the hut among the everglades, and he would put him out of the way at once and forever. Unconscious of his danger the boy slept on, the signs of a bewitching dream crowning his lips. Hawisho did not bend over the couch long before he raised the deadly blade. He set firm his teeth, called his strength into play, and drew back for the stroke of death, when a figure sprung over the brute in the door, and a hand encircled the assassin's wrist.

With a startling cry he leaped to his feet and confronted Capta!

"Hawisho is a liar!" she said, shooting him a look of withering scorn. "He told Capta that he heard an enemy, and that he would find his scalp Micanopy's child waited for him, but he came not. Then she hurried back to the

lodge. Yes, Hawisho is a liar, and Capta's roof shall not shelter such a man. He can go."

She pointed to the door with quivering finger, but the abashed villain hesitated.

"Go!" she repeated, snatching a rifle from the wall "Capta can watch the pale boy alone. Never ask for her laugh again, Hawisho. Oga make way for the Seminole liar!"

At the mention of his own name, the dog rose and stepped aside.

Clenching his hands, and hurling a look of mingled hatred and revenge upon Capta and the still unconscious boy, Hawisho strode from the hut.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOONLIGHT SHOT.

All through that balmy February night—for a February night is balmly in Florida—Capta watched the sleeping boy. After Hawisho's departure she had closed the door, and Oga the watch-dog lay near the threshold.

The eyes of the red princess beamed kindly on the sleeper, and she would not close them during the long hours. Perhaps she feared the return of the baffled chief, for the rifle lay across her lap, and a keen knife was within reach.

Troubled in mind, the girl appeared, and exhibited much uneasiness as the light of day increased. She wanted to rouse the youth, yet she hated to disturb his peaceful slumbers. By and by he opened his eyes and beheld his beautiful watcher.

"Pale boy sleep well," said Capta with a smile. "He dreamed of happy hours, for he smiled while Capta watched Will he not tell his dream?"

Frank Nesbit slowly shook his head.

"I would not, girl," he said, "and then dreams are such foolish things besides. I will get up and look about. Where is Hawisho?"

"He is gone," answered Capta. "When he went away he took his rifle and his knife, and he said dark things with his eyes."

The boy looked surprised.

"Did you quarrel?" he asked.

Capta did not reply but looked away.

He pressed her to unburden her heart, and relate the events of the night.

At last she complied, and the youth listened to the narrative with bated breath. She told the story of her heroism without ostentation.

"He will come back and harm you," said Frank. "I am afraid of this. I care not for myself."

"Capta is Micanopy's child, and he dare not touch her," exclaimed the Seminole girl with a show of pride. "Listen, pale boy. The Seminole nation believe that their princess is hidden from her father and Caloochie; but they know not where. No braves know save Hawisho; no chief save Osceola. Her people say she is in the right, and they will not take her back to Micanopy who believes her dead."

"But Hawisho may betray your retreat to the king," said Frank.

"No!" replied Capta thoughtfully, "he will not do that for he loves the princess. He hates the pale boy."

"I am glad of it. I have an enemy who is worth the slaying now," cried the youth. "Capta, what would Osceola say were he to return and find you alone?"

"He would say 'good' when Capta told him all," she answered quickly. "Pale boy, you must go. You have told me about the big hunter with whom you trail the tigers of the everglades. Go to him. If you stay with Capta, Hawisho will return and drink your blood. In the hummock woods and the swamp bushes you are his equal. Capta sets you free. She will not make you swear that you will not seek the scalps of her people. They have wronged you; they scalped your father and left him to rot where he fell. It is just that you trail them."

As she paused she took a rifle from the wall and handed it to the youth.

"And this," she continued, drawing from her bosom a tiny

Spanish scarf of a beautiful crimson color, and delicately fringed with white and green beads. "Take the mantle of Micanopy's child. Her people know it; they respect it. If the rifle of the Seminole is aimed at your heart, show Capta's mantle, and the ball will not leap from the hollow rod. A pale chief gave it to Capta when she was a babe, and the nation swore that it should be sacred, and the life of the wearer, too."

Frank Nesbit stood before the Indian princess like a person in a dream of enchantment, and he allowed her to throw the scarf or mantle about his neck.

"Now," she said, rousing him, "the pale boy must go. He and Capta will meet again. Let him watch for Hawisho and for Osceola. But from Morello he has nothing to fear."

Our hero started at the last sentence, and was about to speak concerning the Mixed Rider when Capta pointed into the forest.

"Look! the light of the sun creeps into Capta's retreat. It will soon make plain the trailer of the everglades."

Frank Nesbit understood, and seized the scarlet hand upon whose fingers glistened a trio of costly rings.

She let him raise it to his lips, and impulsively he tore himself away.

A few minutes later the hut and its occupant had vanished from his sight, and he was picking his way across a dismal swamp. Capta had marked out the proper course, and he was pursuing it, confident that he would ere long reach the road that led to the desolated plantation of the Grants.

The strong daylight enabled him to pick his way through the everglades with comparative ease; but, notwithstanding this, he became bewildered and at last reluctantly admitted that he was describing a circle which he had made before.

He saw that the sun had passed the meridian, and he was anxious to rejoin Old Crossfire whom he would doubtless find on or near the road. He had made up his mind to visit the Grant mansion alone should he fail to find the scout, for the home of Maggie Grant possessed many pleasant recollections for him.

He sat down on a fallen tree and calmed his bewildered mind. He partook of the roasted partridge which Capta had

given him, and then, strengthened by the rest, resumed his journey. The vale of death seemed to surround him. No sounds came to his ears, the poisonous serpents made no noise as they crawled among the decaying trees, and the turtle dived into the heavy water in silence.

The sun crept westward, and the shadows of the magnolias lengthened until they seemed to kiss the horizon, and by and by the moon manifested her presence in the skies.

All at once the weary youth recognized his whereabouts. He was in a discernible path, and a peculiar log told him that he had crossed it a few hours before with Old Crossfire and his bloodhound.

His young heart gave a great leap for joy, and he increased his gait with much eagerness. The juncture of the path with the road he sought was not far away, and he soon saw the moonlit opening.

Had he not become bewildered in the everglades he would have reached the spot while the sun was still high.

With an ejaculation of joy he leaned against the very tree to which the reader has seen Old Crossfire pin the appointment for the meeting at the Grant mansion that night.

But the boy did not see the paper right away, for the cantering of two horses startled him, and caused him to shelter himself in the magnolia shade.

"The accursed Mixed Riders are abroad again," he murmured, cocking Capta's rifle; "I'll drop one if I can."

A moment later the horses came in sight, and the youth was surprised to behold the two mysterious trailers—the two girls who have figured so conspicuously and strangely in our romance.

They drew rein in the road scarcely ten paces from the watcher and conversed in low tones. The light of the moon fell on the dark masks that once more covered their faces.

Eagerly Frank Nesbit bent forward to catch their words, and to scrutinize their forms.

"Let us ride on and stop at the old house," said one in a voice that caused the youth to start.

"Why not follow them to the river, at least?"

"'Twill avail us naught. The hunter is not about; he must be hunting the boy."

"If the Seminoles have caught him they will give him short shrift."

"If they do, let them tremble."

The last words rippled over unseen lips in a hiss.

"Girl, let us ride on. We can sleep in the old place once more."

"Then come," said the other. "We will—back! they are returning!"

Instantly they wheeled their steeds and guided them into the path. They halted within a few feet of the youth, and sat immobile in the saddles.

The cause of their action was soon apparent—a number of horses were approaching from the west.

Presently a band of men, easily recognized as the Mixed Riders, drew rein in the road, and on the very spot lately vacated by the two females.

Frank Nesbit counted them; there were seven.

He saw the matchless form of Morello, and his fingers wandered to the trigger, but he kept the weapon low, and watched the women and the Riders alternately.

At the edge of the group sat a man whose figure and bearing proclaimed him a pale-face. The youth noticed him, and wondered whom he could be. And while he looked he heard one of the two females whisper.

"*He* is with them!"

Suddenly the strange tableau was broken. The Mixed Riders were gathering up their reins, when the report of a rifle was heard. The man upon whom the youth was gazing quivered in the saddle, and with a wild shriek dropped the reins.

He would have fallen had not Morello's arm shot forward and snatched him from his horse!

The next moment spurs glittered in the moonlight, and the Mixed Riders were flying down the fatal road.

A cry from one of the women startled the youth.

"They have killed him already! Horror! It was I, sister, who drove him to his death!" the hidden lips gasped, and the speaker fell into the arms of her companion.

"I trust that he is not dead," said the stronger girl. Rouse, sister. We will hunt the man who fired that shot."

"Did you recognize the crack of that rifle?" asked the faint girl, rising.

"Yes, 'twas his—Old Crossfire's."

"He may curse this hour on his dying day!" said the second girl, firmly.

"Ay! but what is this?"

With a start the speaker leaned forward in the saddle; the scout's notice on the leaning tree had caught her attention, and Frank Nesbit held his breath.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCALPLESS SCOUT.

After deciphering the notice, the two women riders walked their steeds into the road and cantered slowly toward the Grant plantation.

Frank Nesbit waited till the sound of hoofs had died away before he spoke.

"I do not know what to make of all this," he said gazing at the white paper which the girl had not disturbed. "The sound of a voice which I have just heard calls up recollections of the past—recollections of the days when Maggie Grant was living. I seem to live in a world of mystery. But," and he started from the tree, "the life of my friend is in danger! I too recognized the crack of Crossfire's rifle. His ball struck the lover of one of those strange girls, and she seeks his blood. She will not spare him."

Tearing the notice from the magnolia that no one after him might see it and seek the place of meeting with malicious designs; he sprung into the road and hurried after the twin night riders.

He knew that the Grant mansion was not far down the road, and that the twain would reach it before him.

By extra exertion he might gain the old house in time to lend his friend valuable assistance.

He ran over the major part of the distance, and at last,

silent and seemingly tenantless in the moonlight, he beheld the ruined house. Drawing near under cover of the trees he inspected the place; but not a living object repaid his scrutiny. Old Crossfire had had time to reach the spot since the delivery of the fatal shot, and it was not likely that the masks had relinquished their intention of seeking him there.

Frank Nesbit weighed the case *pro* and *con* before advancing, and still unsettled in mind, left his concealment.

"Come weal or woe," he murmured, "I'll satisfy my doubts."

He encircled the building cautiously, and then entered through the kitchen.

The silence of death hung about him, and the sickly moonlight seemed the very pall of death itself.

Into the large parlor he advanced with increasing courage, but only to greet silence and vacancy as before.

"Sam isn't here," he murmured, stepping to the window and drawing the curtains aside. "I wonder what keeps him. I have kept my part of the appointment; he should keep his."

A flood of moonlight streamed into the chamber, and drew queer shadows on the walls.

Absorbed in thought the youth stood at the window, until a slight noise, like that made by the moving of a chair startled him.

He turned quickly on his heel, and the next moment with an ejaculation of surprise sprung aside.

For he confronted a tall Indian whose tomahawk had without doubt been poised over his unprotected head.

Mechanically his fingers flew to his rifle; but the clicking of other locks deterred him, and he saw tufted heads rise over the old French piano.

Resistance was useless, and in the best grace he could command, he allowed himself to be made a prisoner!

"Pale boy wait for scout," said the Indian who had startled him at the window. "But he come not. See!"

The Seminole's hand flew to his belt, and a fresh scalp was drawn therefrom.

"Scout watch Mixed Riders," continued the savage, "and he shoot one—down by head of everglade trail. Mebbe boy

bear gun. Caloochie and his braves there, and when scout turn to run Wawisho's arrow hit 'im and Caloochie get his scalp. He brave man, kill many Seminoles; but he treads the long trail now."

A tear for the fate of Old Crossfire stood in the youth's eyes while the Indian spoke.

The scout's absence was now explained.

"Did pale boy see the two squaw riders?" asked Caloochie suddenly.

"Yes."

"They ride by here while ago. Caloochie waiting for them to come back. They stop and look at house; but all at once ride away as if the Red Sticks were on their trail."

The youth saw that the Indians were lying in wait for the women riders, who in all probability had discovered the presence of foes and made good their escape.

But he was a prisoner again.

By and by the remainder of Caloochie's band crept over the piano and prepared to depart. One carried Old Crossfire's rifle, another his knife. They took exultant pride in displaying the trophies to the youth who said nothing.

The Indians' steeds were tethered in the orange grove in the rear of the house, and pleased, yet dissatisfied with their night's ride, they mounted. Caloochie vaulted to the back of a white horse, and Frank Nesbit was helped to a seat before him.

"Caloochie take little hair from scout," said the chief directing the bay's gaze to the iron gray scalp that hung at his belt. "But it enough to tell Osceola that his white foe is dead. Ha! ha! boy never trail with scout again."

Caloochie paused suddenly.

Perhaps he caught the clicking noise that heralded his doom.

The crack of a rifle brought every horse to a dead halt.

The Red Stick leader reeled in his saddle, and tumbled to the ground with a dark red spot between his serpent eyes!

It was a death shot; the bullet was in Caloochie's brain.

In the confusion that followed, Frank Nesbit found himself unnoticed. He sat on the chief's horse unbound, and with the reins in his hands.

Acting upon the impulses of the moment, he shouted the Seminole command to the white steed, and was off like a shot. His action was greeted with a yell of rage, and forgetting that the foe who had deprived Caloochie of life might be ready for a second victim, the savages threw their guns to their shoulders.

Simultaneously four rifles cracked; but the adventuresome youth remained in the saddle and soon disappeared.

The white horse was a creature of strength and beauty, and exerting his supply of the former became unmanageable.

When he struck the road his young rider tried to keep him therein; but signally failed. With a bound he cleared the stretch of beaten ground, and dashed across the broad savanna that lay beyond.

During his flight from the orange grove a bough had deprived Frank of his hat, and the winds toyed with his long, auburn hair.

By and by the horse settled down to a moderate speed; and with joy young Nesbit discovered that he could controll him.

"I'll go back to the road now," he said, turning the animal's head, and away he cantered in a south-easterly direction, aiming to strike the road at its junction with the often described everglade trail.

He busied himself in forming plans which were abruptly broken by the sudden halting of the horse.

The cause of the animal's strange action was soon apparent. The body of a man lay on the trampled grass, and the youth bent down to look at it. He gazed a moment, and then with a cry of horror leaped to the ground.

As he knelt beside the body a growl arrested his attention, and a Cuban bloodhound came forward showing his teeth.

The horse showed some signs of fright; but the youth retained the reins and calmed the excited beast.

"Sam, Sam Thatcher!" cried the boy. "Are you dead? The Red Sticks are on the war-path; but I am here. I came to hunt our common enemy. But—but he is gone. Tiger."

The dog set up a mournful howl, and seizing his master by the collar shook him violently.

"'Tis no use Tiger!" said the boy. "Your old master is dead. You will never—"

The youth started to his feet for the scout had opened his eyes.

"What does this mean?" was his first ejaculation, permitting his eyes to wander wildly about. "I thought they had killed me. After I shot the Mixed Rider something hit me in the side, and then I fell back."

"It was an arrow, Sam, and the shaft is broken off in your body," said the youth, "and they scalped you, too."

"What! hev the red-skins got Sam Thatcher's sculp? No, boy thet can not be. Put my hand to my head. I'm rather weak."

The boy lifted the hand, and the scout's face was crossed by a ludicrous expression.

"Sculped, by Tampa!" he cried. "Put Tiger's paw up there, Frank. I want the dog to know that I'm a sculpless man."

The youth obeyed the strange request.

"Where'd you get that horse?" asked Old Crossfire looking up at the white steed. "It looks like one Caloochie rides."

Frank Nesbit replied that it was the same animal, and narrated his adventure at the plantation. Old Crossfire listened attentively, and when the youth had finished, said:

"Jist help me on the beast, Frank. I'm sorter weak, you see. Sculped, by Tampa! Old Crossfire hasn't finished the Mixed Riders yet. He war born to do this. We'll go down to the old house. I want to solve a kind of a mystery down har."

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRAVE MAN.

"THIS is what a fellow gets for joining the Mixed Riders —a bullet in his breast, and that bullet from the rifle of a white man. I wish this life would terminate one way or the other and that quickly. Heaven knows that I do not possess enough patience to worry through with a wound. I wish I could get about again. By George! I'd desert Morello, and that girl should learn that her pretty eyes can not drive Pascal Jardin to death the second time."

The speaker reclined on a bed of skins in the dusky corner of a small apartment.

His face was much emaciated, but the livid spots of hectic fever burned on his cheeks, and his eyes beamed with an unnatural luster. Near him stood a brown earthen pitcher and a goblet which was filled with a brackish liquid. A plate of food also was within reach.

The cabin which he inhabited stood on the gently sloping sides of a small hummock and the outlook from the low-browed door was any thing but pleasantness.

The reader has seen Pascal Jardin, the young creole, receive his wound.

It was the youthful planter who received the scout's bullet at the head of the everglade trail while the two masks and Frank Nesbit watched the Mixed Riders.

Ten days had passed away since that eventful night, and during that time the planter had skirted the valley of the dead.

From the fatal spot Morello had borne him to the hut on the hummock, and for six days watched him unceasingly. Some invisible cords seemed to bind the twain together. According to the girl's commands, Pascal Jardin had joined the Mixed Riders, but his career with them seemed inclined to be brief.

During his sickness he had reflected on the events of the last fortnight which seemed a dream. He could scarcely believe that during such a brief period he had been deprived of his parents, and that the words of a weak girl had driven him almost to death.

"She does not seek me now," he had hissed almost a thousand times. "I believe that she loves the American boy, after all. If she loves Pascal Jardin she would have been here ere this. I have been a woman's fool."

His soliloquies invariably wound up with the sentence just written, and so often had he uttered them, that he believed their truth.

The dusky shades of a March day were gathering around the lonely cabin where the wounded planter lay. He had reclined on the couch for twenty-four hours without having entertained a single visitor. The Mixed Riders were abroad, he knew not where they rode, but they had left him medicine, food and water.

He listened to the gentle noise of the swaying branches that now and then touched the roof of the cabin, and strange sounds startled him. Evidently he was awaiting the return of a friend.

All at once a footstep fell on his listening ear, and his hand crept away from the couch till it touched a pistol. With his eyes fastened on the window or port-hole in one side of the chamber, he waited for a repetition of the sound.

Suddenly the head of an Indian appeared in the opening, and a pair of vengeful eyes seemed to regard him with triumph.

The features of the visitor could not be seen, and the young planter doubted if his own person was visible to him as the tufted head almost filled the window and deprived the cabin of light.

With strange curiosity the savage head was regarded. It seemed to be glued to the sill as it moved not, and at last unable to controll himself longer the planter cocked the pistol and leveled it.

Still the savage remained immobile, and with as deliberate an aim as he could obtain, Pascal touched the trigger.

There was a loud report, and with a wild shriek the head vanished.

"It was a Seminole!" exclaimed the creole, startled at the results of his shot. "Now I suppose— Listen! I am surrounded."

The tread of many moccasined feet was distinctly heard without the cabin, and the young planter held his breath.

The hummock, perhaps, was swarming with Indians.

Moments seemed minutes as he waited for the breaking of the dread spell, and the sudden blow on the well barricaded door almost drove him from the couch.

"Well, what do you want?" he cried in a loud tone immediately after the sturdy blow.

"Want door open!"

"Then open it!" replied the young planter. "I will not touch it!"

A minute's silence followed his reply.

"Pale-face must open the door. Hawisho and a hundred Red Sticks surround the hut. They are mad; the blood of Red Fox calls from the leaves for revenge."

"I may as well tell you first as last that I will not open that door to you!" cried the creole firmly. "You scalp a dead man when you scalp me. I will never surrender to the murderers of my parents."

"Hawisho didn't kill creole's parents."

"Your tribe did, and it amounts to the same thing. You might as well proceed to business."

The butt of a rifle answered the brave man, and he staggered from the couch, rifle in hand.

Hawisho retreated from the door, and Pascal heard the sound of many voices in consultation.

By this time the day had declined, and the pall of a Florida night had been thrown over the scene.

The defender of the cabin walked to the wall and tried to see the crowd of foes that held a council of war not far from the door. He heard the council break up, and footsteps again encircled the cabin.

Then Hawisho's voice was heard.

"White chief is brave, and the Red Sticks have hearts," he said. "If he opens the door he may walk away, and the

Indians will burn the cabin of the yellow hound. What does he say?"

"I say that Hawisho is a liar!" was the response from the interior of the cabin. "You would let me walk to a certain spot, and then you would shoot me down. I will hold no more parleys with you. I am ready to die!"

"Pale-face too brave to die!" said Hawisho turning away. "Pale girl cry when she hear of his fate."

Pascal Jardin started at the last words which the Indian had uttered in a low tone, and was about to call him back when a second thought checked his purpose.

"No; the red dog sha'n't cozen me," he said. "He is guessing that I love a white girl—that is all. He never heard of Maumee Glyndon—nor of her cousin Maggie. He is lying. Oh, Maumee, to this you have driven me, and for what?"

He leaned against the wall as he spoke, and an expression of pain had settled on his face, already pale and haggard from the effects of his wound.

"Let them do their worst. I am ready!" he exclaimed after a long pause.

Suddenly the light of a torch flashed into the room, and as it disappeared, the voice of an Indian was heard.

"Pale dog, we are going to burn the wigwam over your head. To-morrow the leaves will fall on your bones."

Pascal Jardin did not speak; but gritted his teeth and kept his post.

He heard a quantity of dry boughs piled against the door, and then the firebrand was applied.

The flames crackled with demoniac fury, and creeping along the logs, appeared at the window, and darted their scarlet tongues at the brave planter, who still griped the rifle; but not a foe could he see.

No doubt they were looking on the work of their hands with eyes agleam with devilish triumph, watching, carefully, too, lest he should escape from the burning.

All at once and with a crash that sounded on his ears like the knell of doom, the door, burned completely through, fell in, and the room was filled with fire.

Then the young planter left his post. His peril made him forget his weakness and seemed to give him strength.

He retreated from the flames and reached the ladder that led to the garret. The opening made in the strong floor above was protected by a door which could be fastened securely on the upper side.

Pascal Jardin ascended the ladder slowly, and with a terrible determination written on his face.

The flames were playing havoc below him; they were licking up the soft couch he had lately abandoned.

"Gods! if I could pay the fiends for their work!" he hissed, when near the top of the ladder. "Maumee Glyndon, I'd give my life to see you now. If I believed you truly love me, I could die like a true Jardin."

With the last words he threw back the batten door, and then recoiled with a ghastly cry.

The roof of the cabin was on fire, and smoke and flames filled the garret!

Surely the last hour of the brave planter had arrived.

The flames had attacked the foot of the ladder!

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER CAPTURE AT THE OLD MANSION.

While Hawisbo and his Red Sticks were besieging Pascal Jardin in the burning cabin on the hummock, strange events were transpiring on a spot quite familiar to the reader.

We left Old Crossfire and his protege riding toward the well known Grant mansion—the scout weak from wounds inflicted by arrow and scalping knife. But a small portion of his scalp had been removed, and he did not seem to mind it, as the wound promised to give him no trouble. He drew the broken shaft from his side, and discovered that it had injured no vital organs. Still, however, he had lost much blood.

The ride to the old house was not attended with danger, and after a thorough reconnoissance the twain entered to find it entirely tenantless. Frank Nesbit's late captors had doubt-

less pursued the slayer of their chief, and would not return. Therefore, the two did not anticipate an attack, and the scout's wounds were dressed by the youth.

The remainder of that night and the following day were spent beneath the mansion roof, and when the shades of night again prevailed, they took their departure.

"Now we'll hunt the Mixed Riders in earnest!" Old Crossfire had said looking to his rifle for the tenth time. "In less than a fortnight we'll clean the band out, and during the time, Frank, we'll also try to solve that little mystery about the gals."

With the foregoing digression from the opening sentences of the current chapter we return to the Grant mansion.

The day was rapidly waning when the two Masked Riders who have played such a strange and conspicuous part in our Floridian romance rode into the orange grove in the rear of the old house and dismounted. They tethered their horses to a young tree and entered the kitchen.

Already a silver moon had appeared above the horizon, and its ambient light stole into the parlor.

"This is the old place, Maggie," said one of the visitors, for the first time throwing back her mask and revealing a beautiful face pale and tearful. "Here we passed many happy hours."

"But they have vanished forever," said the other who had drawn the piano stool up to the ivory keys. "Maumee, come here. I will play and you shall sing."

"No, no, cousin," said Maumee, starting forward, her face paler than ever. "It will not do. Foes ride up and down the road. Osceola and his Red Sticks are abroad."

"I will—I must play!" replied the one at the instrument with a show of firmness. "My heart is breaking in this, the old house. If Osceola and his scarlet marauders listen at the very doors, I will play!"

The girl called Maumee saw the pearly tears that trickled down the speaker's cheek and turned away.

"Play then, Maggie. I hope 'twill ease my heart," she said.

Lightly yet burdened with sadness, the fair girl's hands swept over the keys, and a beautiful song floated upward.

Rich were the voices of the singers, musical the long deserted instrument, and despite the dangers that lurked about them, they sung of the past.

At last the final strain died away, and the performer rose and kissed her companion.

"Come, let us go now, Maggie," said Maumee touching the slender arm of the girl whom she addressed. "Let us go out and look at the graves."

"In a minute cousin," was the reply, and the speaker moved to the elaborate center table and lifted therefrom a large copy of the Scriptures.

She turned the leaves until her eyes rested upon the "family record." For a moment she feasted them on the record of births; but turned to the death list. It was not full. There was but one name—the name of Judson Grant.

"I will add another record," she murmured, and drawing a pencil from her bosom she wrote in a firm hand.

"MOTHER: *Massacred by the Indians, November 25th*, 1835. "*The hand that records thy doom hath terribly avenged thee, mother.*"

Maumee looked over the writer's shoulder and murmured as the last word was written:

"Yes, Maggie; six and twenty Indians have paid for that night's work with their lives."

Then the old book was closed and returned to its place, the masks were adjusted again, and the twain left the house, but not without casting a "longing, lingering look behind."

Straight toward the three graves already described they hastened, and at length with hands clasped in hands tearfully stood over them.

Suddenly one of the girls stooped and looked up into her companion's eyes.

"Maumee some despoiler has been here," she said.

"No! who would seek to dishonor the dead so long buried?"

"Heaven knows, cousin; but believe me that ruthless hands have visited this sacred spot. Mother's grave has not been disturbed, but the others have been desecrated."

An examination proved the truth of the assertion. Two of the mounds had been disturbed. The appearance of the

earth seemed to point to an exhumation, and the girls, lifting their masks again, stared into each other's face.

"What can it mean? who has been here?" said one

"Heaven knows."

"What motive could the despoiler boast of?"

For a moment a deathly silence reigned about the graves

"There are two persons who might wish to pry into the secrets of these mounds," said Maumee at last.

"And pray who are they? I might guess; but I will not try. Tell me, Maumee."

"The scout and the boy."

"I thought of them. Do you think they have been here?"

"Something tells me that they have, and makes me believe that this is their work."

"I did not want them to discover all yet."

"No. But, Maggie, tell me one thing. Do not withhold it. Frank Nesbit has not forgotten you. Have you forgotten him?"

"No, Maumee."

"You loved him once, Maggie, for you have told me so."

"I was a girl then, and," with a faint smile, "you were my rival."

"Yes; but that was so long ago."

"Pascal Jardin has stepped between."

"Poor fellow!" said Maumee with a sigh. "I believe him dead. The scout shot him; we saw him fall and swore to hunt the pale-face for that shot. Morello would not tell me about Pascal when last I saw him, so I believe him dead."

"Now you can love the scout's boy."

No, Maggie, he is your love. He gave you a ring."

But do not forget that I was a girl then—a child."

"Where is the ring?"

"Back there in the house."

"Ah, a girl's love is a fickle thing. You love one whose life hangs on a thread. You have turned from a white boy to one whose skin is dark."

"But he is so brave, Maumee. You know what we owe him?"

"I wish we owed him nothing."

Maggie bowed her head and stood like a penitent over the graves.

Her companion watched her reproachfully, and in silence.

"I love *him* still," she murmured at length, "but my latest love is pledged to the hunted man."

"Break it!"

"I can not. Cousin Maumee, nothing save death can separate me from the chief of the Mixed Riders."

"Then may Crossfire's bullet speedily find his heart," ejaculated Maumee, and Maggie started forward.

"Girl, what has come over you? Why do you talk thus? You do not love me."

"Love you, Maggie? I have never for one moment ceased to—"

The cracking of a twig broke the sentence, and the twain looked up to behold half a score of Indians.

Instantly their rifles were snatched from the ground; but the stern voice of a tall chief kept them from their shoulders.

"Pale girls, put up guns. The fingers of my braves are on their triggers."

"Must we surrender to our worst enemies?" said Maumee, looking at her friend.

"Yes; resistance would avail us naught. Oh, Maumee, if we had heard the footstep sooner."

Quietly the masks threw their weapons on the ground in token of submission, and with exultant ejaculations their captors came forward. The red stick that a prominent warrior bore, proclaimed the identity of the band.

"Osceola trailing through the everglades when he heard sweet music," said the king of the Seminoles for the leader of the band was none other than that redoubtable man. "So he turns aside and leads his braves to the old house. Now he see who pale-faces are. Will they lift the black cloth for Osceola?"

Without a word the captives raised the masks, and the chief gazed into their faces a long time.

"Girls, pretty girls—brave," he said. "They have hunted the Red Sticks a long time; but," glancing round upon his braves, "they will hunt them no more. Osceola must keep

his word. The Great Spirit has written it down that he might never forget."

"And what has Osceola sworn to do?" asked Maggie calmly.

"He has sworn to give the pale trailers over to his warriors. They have followed the Mixed Riders; they have protected their chief from Seminole arrows and bullets; they have killed six and twenty Red Sticks. For all this Osceola's braves demand their blood."

"Osceola then will kill women."

The girl's words stung the chief to the heart, and his eyes dropped in shame.

"I thought that Osceola commanded the Red Sticks," said Maumee.

"He does; but he can not break his word," replied the chief in low tones, as he raised his eyes. "Hawago, the pale girls are yours, and you lead the braves of Osceola now. Meet your chief, warriors, at the cypress ford when the sun rises. Osceola has kept his word."

Without glancing at the doomed pair, the Seminole chief mounted his steed and rode away.

A minute later the cousins were assisted to the backs of their own horses, and guarded by their captors conducted from the spot.

They read their doom in the gleaming eyes that ever regarded them.

Hawago had stripped the masks from their faces into which he loved to gaze with fiendish triumph.

"Whither are we riding?" asked Maggie, at length turning to the leader of the band.

"The pale girls are riding to the long trail that leads to the Manitou's land; reach it by'm-by."

Traversing the orange grove, the band climbed the sides of a hummock, and saw a fire illumine the distant horizon. Maumee called the attention of her companion in captivity to the sight, never dreaming that Pascal Jardin stood in the midst of the flames.

CHAPTER X.

HELP.

THE two girls and their captors were not the only person who beheld the flames of Pascal Jardin's fort from afar.

With interest and anxiety they looked at the light until the leader of the band told them to move on, and deeper into the forests they plunged to a fate yet wrapped in mystery.

I have said that the burning cabin attracted the attention of persons beside those who comprised the group we have just left.

On the summit of a thinly wooded hummock two miles south of the fire stood two figures holding the reins of two black horses. It was evident that they had lately reached the spot for the steeds were still panting from exertion, and the faces of their owners were flushed.

Could the reader have seen them he would have recognized Old Crossfire and Frank Nesbit.

"I don't know what it means exactly," said the trailer, turning to the youth. "I hevn't heard a shot an' I guess that the massacre's about over."

"But who lived in that cabin?" queried the boy.

"Nobody that I know of. I peeked into it a few days afore I fust met you, an' it was empty. 'Pon my soul! I didn't know thet it war inhabited. But let's go down. I'm kind o' curious. What hes happened in the last two weeks hes kinder turned my head. Who'd 'a' thought that Mrs. Grant was sleepin' atween two slaves."

The boy did not reply; but murmured to himself as he turned to his horse.

The twain descended the rather precipitous slope of the hummock, leading their beasts and mounting below, hurried toward the fire. Brighter and brighter grew the flames, and at length Thatcher and his protege reached a secluded spot within a hundred yards of the burning structure.

"They've got somebody hemmed up in that shanty," said the trailer confidently, returning to the youth after a short and cautious reconnoissance; "but I don't know who it is. I can't hear a sound, an' I guess that he hes passed in his papers. Nobody could stand it long in there the way the fire is ragin'? The Red Sticks take things coolly."

"The Red Sticks," ejaculated young Nesbit. "I thought they were the Mixed Riders."

"No; it's a part of Osceola's band, an' Hawisho is at the head of 'em."

"Why that is the fellow who attempted to murder me in Japta's hut!" said the youth, surprised.

"Then ov course you hevn't got real brotherly feelings for him. My fingers itched to draw on 'im, he was standin' so beautiful like ag'in' a tree; but I thought it wouldn't do. We'll wait here to see what the devils are up to. I want to know who they've cornered in this old out o' the way cabin."

While Old Crossfire spoke, he kept his eyes fixed on the burning hut, and all at once a dull noise like the falling of a heavy body within the structure fell upon their ears.

"The thing is goin' to rocks," said the trapper. "I wonder if the treed chap didn't refuse to give in. He's got the grit of a— Great heavens!"

Frank Nesbit uttered an ejaculation of astonishment simultaneously with the trapper, and with hearts throbbing wildly in their throats as it were, they gazed upon the terrible object that had leaped from the fiery cabin.

It had the form and semblance of a man, and a calmer look told the trailer and his companion that it was a man, enveloped in flames. He uttered a wild shriek as the forest air struck his person, and drove the scarlet flames into his face, and he staggered a few feet from the door and dropped to the ground.

The Indians recovered from the fright into which his terrible and sudden appearance had thrown them, leaped forward and extinguished the flames with their blankets.

They rudely jerked the man from the ground, and with praises of his bravery and endurance gathered around, and began to ply him with a bedlam of interrogatives.

"I was not strong enough to load my rifle when you came," the two white spectators heard the captive say, "hence but one of you has fallen. I do not expect mercy at your hands because I do not deserve it. Your tomahawks drank the blood of my mother and father; my weapons have glutted themselves with the blood of your accursed race."

The Indians uttered shouts of vengeance, and turned inquiringly to the chief—Hawisho.

Just then Sam Thatcher and his companion mounted their horses.

"We've got to save that fellow; he's too brave to be tomahawked by a lot o' sneakin' Seminoles," said the Indian-fighter between his teeth.

"We must not fail!"

"We will not, boy! Now, you take that tall Indian with the big feather on his head. I'll attend to Hawisho. As our rifles crack draw your pistols and ride down upon them. Ready?"

"I am ready."

For a moment the stillness of the grave pervaded the secluded place, then two rifles cracked.

From the group about the defender of the cabin a brace of Seminoles staggered and dropped to the ground—dead!

The others were thrown into confusion, and the slayers rode down upon the scalpers like demons of the wind. The attack so unlooked-for and sudden was more than the six remaining braves could stand, and leaving their captive alone they beat a hasty retreat, and disappeared in the forest where the now waving light of the cabin did not penetrate.

The two victors returned after a brief pursuit, and found the pale man leaning against a tree. His clothing had been terribly burned by the flames, and he presented an aspect assuredly horrible.

"Well, well, man," began the trapper; "you've hed a lucky 'scape. Why did you cling to the old shanty when the rafters war fallin' in?"

"I tried to escape by the ladder; but I found the attic on fire when I lifted the trap, and while I stood there, horror-stricken, the flames burned the ladder off and I was

hurled to the ground. I lay there rendered partly insensible by the fall until the fire licked my face, then I made an exertion to escape. Half-bewildered, I got to the door and ran into the midst of the red devils. Isn't your name Thatcher?"

The trailer smiled at the abruptness of the question.

"Yes," he answered. "What might your'n be?"

"My name is Jardin."

"The Indians hev been to your house. I rode up thar the day after their bloody work. This boy is Frank Nesbit."

"I thought so," said the young creole, and a strange light danced in his eyes. "I thought he was the fellow."

The words were couched in a hiss which the youth could not fail to notice.

"I trust we shall be friends," he said, looking squarely into Jardin's eyes. "I am glad that we were enabled to save you."

"I am not," the creole said bitterly. "I would now that you had remained away. I would be dead instead of talking here."

"This is funny talk," broke in Thatcher. "A man's a fool to wish himself dead. I want to live till I have taken the life of every Mixed Rider, an' then I'll go back to Tennessee an' wait till the trumpet calls me."

"Would you kill a Rider now if you could?" asked the creole, with a strange smile passing over his pallid face.

"Try me, Mr. Jardin."

"I will. I am a Mixed Rider. Kill me!"

The trailer started back and gazed amazed into the speaker's face.

"That won't do," he said.

"You have my word. If you want further proof open my shirt and look at a wound. Some enemy of the Mixed Riders shot me down at the head of the Moccasin trail."

"When?"

"Ten nights ago. I was in the midst of the Riders. I guess the assassin mistook me for our chieftain."

Sam Thatcher glanced at young Nesbit and smiled meaningly.

"Look a here," he said, turning suddenly upon the creole.

"I kinder b'lieve your story, and so we'll take you with us. I kin take you on my horse; he'll carry double, an' we'll go up to Fort King—mebbe."

As he finished and without waiting for young Jardin to put in a remonstrance which from his looks he intended to do, he vaulted into the saddle and leaned over for the planter.

He had touched his shoulder when a bullet cut a branch over his head and caused the trio to look up.

A number of Indians well mounted were riding slowly forward and Crossfire recognized their leader as he threw a quick look at Nesbit.

"Run, boy! follow me!" he cried, and jerking the convalescing creole from the ground, he wheeled his steed and dashed off. But as he executed the latter movement, a solitary rifle cracked and the planter slid from Crossfire's horse to the ground.

"Cuss you, Morello, I'll pay you for that shot afore I shut my eyes!" said the trailer, as a twitch of pain quivered his lip. "My arm isn't broken; but I guess thar's a piece o' lead somewhar nigh the bone. Stop, Frank, they're not follerin' us now."

The trailer and the boy drew rein and listened. They had retreated around a hummock which hid the ruins of the cabin and its immediate surroundings from sight, and not a hostile sound reached their ears.

"Come," said Crossfire after a long silence. "We're goin' back."

"What for?"

"I want to shoot the man who put a bullet in my arm," he said, vengefully.

The youth did not reply, and they retraced their steps with great caution.

The fire was burning low, but the twain were enabled to see dark forms near the spot where the cabin had stood. They were grouped, evidently listening to the story of somebody who was speaking slowly and with French accent.

"Now hold the horses, boy. I'll come back in a minute. I kin shoot from that fallen tree, I think. Get up an' be

ready to ride like lightning or to jump down, an' take to the swamps if it must be so."

Old Crossfire left the youth seated on one of the strong blacks while he glided toward a prostrate tree the large leaves of which were still green and succulent. Young Nesbit saw his burly form lose itself among them and waited for the rifle shot.

It was Morello whom Crossfire sought—the chief whose trail he had followed for many days—whose life somebody had repeatedly saved when his hand touched the trigger, ready to drive the fatal bullet home. Now he felt that the hunted Rider was in his power. True, his braves were around him; but the strange preserver was not near, and the trailer was exultant.

The reader can imagine how impatiently the youth, seated in the saddle, ready to fly, waited for the report. With his eyes fixed on the tree-top outlined against the flickering light that sprung from the giant coals, he almost held his breath.

Suddenly the wished-for sound came, sharp and cap-like!

It was the crack of Crossfire's rifle!

A shrill yell followed, and the youth heard an ejaculation of triumph and his friend's hurrying feet.

Aha! he thought; Crossfire had killed the famous chief of the Mixed Riders at last!

That thought sent a thrill through his entire frame, and he was imagining that he could see the trailer's form very near when a pistol exploded not ten feet distant. Frank Nesbit quivered, the reins dropped from his hands, and with a groan he fell forward, his arms encircling the neck of the black horse.

The steed sprung from its companion with a wild snort of affright, and dashed away through the forest.

Frank Nesbit lay on his broad, strong neck like a dead man!

He did not hear the cries and shots that followed his strange departure, nor did he see Crossfire struggling with clubbed rifle like a demon in the midst of a dozen foes.

By and by the horse struck the road I have so often men-

tioned, but a great owl, darting across his face, turned him into the forest again.

He could not shake his unconscious rider off, and it was the smell of blood, trickling down his neck, that fired his spirit, and urged him on.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE EVE OF EXECUTION.

"I WONDER what they are going to do with us?"

"They are going to put us out of the way. I am sure of that. I do not expect a rescue. For myself, I do not ask one. He is dead; the ball of a white man has reached his heart, and the sin of his sudden taking off lies at my door."

"Maumee, do not talk thus!"

"I must. Yes, I drove him into the ranks of your lover's band, and I am responsible for his death. He loved me; he proved this with his blood."

"He was brave. Witness his conflict with the Indians when they swooped like night-hawks down upon his home. Maumee, some terrible death is in store for us this night. Osceola, too chivalrous to strike, has given us over to the tender mercies of his band. He had promised them that they should dispose of us when captured and as king of the Seminoles he must keep his word inviolate."

"They are halting now. Are we to die here?"

"I suppose so. Isn't this a beautiful place, Maumee? There is but one other place where I would choose to die."

"And that, Maggie, is—"

"On mother's grave."

"But we are not choosers," answered Maumee, with a faint smile. "Death in robes of beauty seems to reign here. The very night-birds are silent, and the stars are the lamps that light up this sylvan court."

A tall Indian approached the girls while Maumee was

speaking, and when she had finished assisted them to alight.

"Pretty place," he said, for understanding some English, he had caught the purport of their words. "Birds all asleep; but the snake is awake."

"We are to die here?" said Maggie, looking into his swarthy face.

"Pale girls die here," he responded.

"By fire?"

"No, too pretty to burn. Osceola said 'kill girls without pain.' Cahoochie kill 'em with the knife. One blow and they step on the long trail. Cahoochie never strike twice."

Maumee looked up and saw a giant Indian near by examining the long blade of a knife in the light of the stars that stole with soft radiance through the interstices of the branches.

Then the tall Indian left them and the party held a brief consultation. The council proved inharmonious. A minority wanted to disobey Osceola and torture the beautiful captives, who had dealt death and destruction to their tribe with unsparing hands; but the majority led by Kalido overruled them with sternness and they submitted with poor grace.

Preparations for the execution were at once made.

Cahoochie the appointed slayer sharpened his knife, drawing it repeatedly across his thumb during the operation, and at length announced his readiness to carry out the fiat of the band.

He removed every article of clothing from his body save a breech-cloth, and thus stripped for his bloody work, advanced upon the girls.

They were clasped in each other's arms and this savage, ready as he was to drive the knife to their hearts, could not rudely separate them.

"Girls praying to Great Spirit," he said, turning to Kalido. "Shall Cahoochie wait till they get through?"

"The stars will soon grow dim. We must meet Osceola at the cypress ford," Kalido answered, and Cahoochie advanced again.

He touched Maggie's arm and it was a beautifully calm face that turned to him. Indian that he was, he thought it the face of a spirit being.

But he must do his duty.

"Time come!" he said, hiding the knife behind him "Pale girls ready?"

"We are ready," answered the girl, and the pair faced the executioner and his confreres, who stood a few feet away silent and deeply interested spectators.

The savage looked at them undecided which to slay first but at last as an ejaculation of impatience fell from Kalido's lips he started toward Maggie.

His lips were compressed as he raised the knife; but all at once he lowered it and turned to the band.

A horse was advancing toward them.

Kalido had heard the sound, and was motioning Cahoochie to withhold the hand of execution yet a little while.

The measured tread of the animal nonplussed the Seminoles, and the girls, mystified as well, gazed into each other's eyes.

All at once a command caused the Indians to drop to the ground, and as Cahoochie obeyed he drew the captives with him. The clicking of rifle locks beneath blankets was indistinctly heard, and the shining blades of more than one knife glittered as it was drawn from the belt.

Unconscious of danger the horse and his rider, if he had one, came on straight into the net which had been hastily spread, and presently not ten feet from the dark forms he halted and began to snuff the air about him.

At that moment Cahoochie sprung at the dangling reins and with a snort, the animal started back on his haunches. But other Indians leaped to the rescue and the horse found himself a captive.

But the rider? He lay on the bloody neck of the beast like a corpse, and as one savage unlocked his hands, another jerked him off. He fell to the ground, but moved, and the astonished Indians gathered about him.

Then it was seen that the youth Frank Nesbit was alive, and exclamations of joy were heard on every side. Perhaps they recognized him as a companion of the implacable foe

of their race, and consequently their enemy also. And he was alive!

The Great Spirit had guided him into their hands, and he should not escape.

"White boy's face bloody. What make it?" asked Kalido.

"An Indian shot me; but he shot in the dark," was the feeble reply.

"Where big trailer?"

"I don't know."

"Does pale boy know the two white girls there?"

Frank Nesbit turned quickly and for the first time his eyes fell upon the beautiful captives.

Impulsively he started forward and held out his hands.

"Maggie, thank Heaven that I have found you. I have deemed you dead; but we meet on earth again."

"Yes, but on the threshold of death. The knife was raised over us when you came."

"They will not kill you?"

"They will, and you, no doubt, will die with us, and on this spot."

"Gladly will I do so knowing that the old love still burns in your heart. Maggie, where is the ring? Did the red fiends tear it from your finger."

He glanced at her hand as he spoke and for the first time the girl's lips trembled.

"Let us not talk about that now," she said, with an effort. "In the presence of death we should think of the future."

"But, tell me, Maggie Grant, that you love me," he cried. "Long ago you told me so. Repeat your words and I will save your life."

"You!" said the girl, with a smile. "A captive like ourselves!"

"They dare not touch me. They shall not touch you!" he cried.

Startled at his words, the girl was about to reply when Cahoochie whirled the youth about, and once more with glittering knife stepped to the task interrupted by the arrival of the boy.

"Here, you shall not kill them!" cried the youth, stepping

before the giant executioner, and to the girls he whispered. "If I can not save you, we can at least die together."

Cries of rage burst from the throats of the Indians, and, knife-armed, they sprung forward.

Nearer the devoted girls Frank Nesbit drew, and when he felt the hot breaths of his foes on his cheeks, and saw the gleaming knives very near his skin he thrust his hand into his bosom and drew forth a beautiful Spanish scarf of quain design and elegant workmanship!

This he held before their faces, and as if by magic every knife-arm dropped, and the savages started back with awe and fear depicted on their countenances.

It was the silken scarf of Capta the lost child of Micanopy!

CHAPTER XII.

OLD CROSSFIRE AND THE RIDERS.

WHILE Frank Nesbit is flaunting the scarf of the Seminole princess into the faces of the Indians, and for the moment paralyzing their angry passions with mingled fear and awe, let us return to the old trailer—to the vicinity of the burned cabin.

From the tree-top he saw the man whose trail he had followed for many days and nights—Morello, the chief of the Mixed Riders. His handsome face strangely marked by Castilian features was bathed in the ruddy glow of the fire, and he stood erect with arms folded on his bosom a fair mark for the bullet of his pale-faced enemy.

Pascal Jardin still weak and breathing hard, sat at the foot of a magnolia tree, and a number of Indians and negroes had gathered about him in sitting postures. Morello was the only one of the party standing erect.

Sam Thatcher muttered some words which sounded very like "I've got him now!" when his eyes fell upon this scene, and he rested his rifle on a strong limb.

"I'll take 'im just over the left eye, I guess," he said let-

ting his head drop to one side until his cheek touched the rifle stock, and then his keen sight shot along the trusty barrel.

A moment of silence followed, and the sharp report of the scout's rifle quivered the night atmosphere.

Then came a wild shriek; the chief of the Mixed Riders threw both hands to his head, and staggered back to be caught by his braves and lowered to the ground.

"By Tampa! I've finished 'im!" exclaimed the trailer leaping from the branches. "The rest won't be hard to deal with now. He won't kill any more Bertie Wilsons."

He was hurrying toward the spot where he had left young Nesbit and the horses, when a flash and the report of a pistol brought him to a stand.

Then he heard the steeds dash away and discovered that his foes were hard upon him. The pistol's flash revealed the marksman, a savage—not a Mixed Rider but a Red Stick. He sprung forward as the weapon cracked and seized the bridle of the trailer's horse. The next moment he had vaulted into the saddle and was gone in the twinkling of an eye. Though Thatcher could not see the latter action, certain sounds told him that it had taken place, and he was still undecided concerning his own movements when a heavy body suddenly fell against him.

There was no resisting the weight; he went to the earth beneath it; but a moment later had freed himself of the living incubus. He was struck with a fist as he sprung to his feet, and then began a struggle for life. It was a fight in darkness, I might say, for the stars shed poor light on the scene, and the combatants did not look like human beings.

Old Crossfire's clubbed rifle for a while kept his foes at respectful distance; but when a dark panther-like form leaped up from the earth at his very feet and clung to his right arm like that beast, he was overpowered, and securely bound.

Then he discovered that his assailants, six in number, had escaped with a few slight bruises. They had kept beyond reach of the swinging rifle, preferring to accomplish by strategy that which they could not do with numbers and escape unhurt.

The captive was conducted to the tree where Pascal Jar-

din still reclined, and his eyes fell upon the motionless form of Morello.

There was clotted blood on the left temple, and the rigidity of stern death had already touched the handsome features.

Old Crossfire felt a triumph that smacked of the devil as he gazed upon the chief, and when he looked at the creole, the youth was giving him a smile which he could not analyze

"I guess he is dead," young Jardin said, glancing at Morello. "You shot from the tree-top, I suppose."

"Yes, and I shot well, too," answered the trailer. "I never miss a man at fifty yards."

The last word was still on his lips when a young Indian appeared, leading four horses by the bridles.

Three of the strange Riders—two Seminoles and one giant maroon—now walked to the horses, and held a low conversation at the grouped heads.

Presently they separated, and the maroon led Old Crossfire to one of the steeds and assisted him to mount.

He asked no questions but obeyed every command with commendable alacrity.

He knew that something terrible was going to happen; he saw that in his captors' eyes.

"Good-by!" said Pascal Jardin looking up at the scout as the trio threw themselves upon their horses.

Crossfire smiled.

"Do you think we will never meet again?" he asked.

"I know we never will," said the creole.

"I hope we may," replied Thatcher. "But I guess I'm ready to go. I'd like to see Tige and the boy ag'in. I guess some red devil has killed my old dog, fur I hevn't seen 'im for nigh onto a week. I've settled accounts with Morello; he and Sam Thatcher hev squared accounts furever."

At this juncture one of the Indians took the reins of the scout's horse and nodded to his companions.

The animals moved away on a funeral pace.

"Good-by, white man," said Thatcher, turning his head for a last glimpse. "Git out o' the company you're in now. It's Sam Thatcher's last advice."

The creole did not reply; but waved his hand in a gesture of farewell and then slowly regained his feet.

One by one the horses of the separating party disappeared, and at last the sound of hoofs was no longer heard. Morello was lifted from the ground and placed across a saddle, and Pascal Jardin was helped to a seat on horseback. Then the remainder of the Mixed Riders proceeded in a direction contrary to the one traveled by the scout's guard, and the scene of tragic actions was deserted.

Five persons stand on the bank of a beautiful Florida river near the mouth of a quiet tributary. The skin of one is almost white; the skin of another denotes him a half-breed; the others consist of two negroes and one Indian.

They are evidently awaiting the arrival of a second party for every sound that salutes their ears causes them to turn their faces toward the south.

All at once a noise that cannot be mistaken startles the horses belonging to the party, and they prick up their ears and whinney joyously. The men have heard the sound, and instantly every one is on the tiptoe of expectation.

The sounds caused by horses' feet grow more distinct, and at last three dark objects are seen coming up the river's bank. They grow into steeds and a rider for each becomes visible.

The group of men start forward and the riders halt. Two maroons and one Indian spring to the ground, and are plied with questions.

"Where is the pale-face?"

"Ask the Indian's God. If you would find him step upon the trail that leads to the caves of the bad spirits. He will break the twigs of the everglades no more; he has slept his last sleep beneath the golden apple tree. He has killed his last Rider."

The questioners are satisfied.

Saddles are filled again, and eight persons ride away.

The alligator lifts his head from the water and is not disturbed.

What has become of Old Crossfire?

CHAPTER XIII

SHAWL AND LASSO.

THE reader will recollect the parting between Frank Nesbit the young scout and Capta the beautiful red inmate of the hut in the hummock.

Upon that occasion she gave him the Spanish scarf which he flaunted in the faces of the Red Sticks, as he sprung between them and their girlish victims.

Capta's parting words rung in his ears. "They dare not touch the hand that holds up the shining scarf."

He but half believed this; yet he had assured the girls that he could save them from the torture of the knife-blow or the thud of the tomahawk.

The savages started back as though a thunder-bolt had dropped at their feet when they beheld the strange talisman. They looked into each other's faces as if to say what means this?

Where did *he* get the princess' scarf.

There he stood before the astonished girls, gazing at the savages, and smiling at their consternation.

Hawago the painted leader of the band broke the silence. He stepped forward as his lips parted.

"The young white chief wears the pretty shawl of Capta," he said. "The Seminole dares not touch it with avenging hands. Where did he get it?"

"I will not tell the red chief," said the youth firmly.

"Does he know where Micanopy's child is? The old chief has missed her long, and he will make the white boy a sachem if he will trail the girl for Hawago."

The youth smiled derisively.

"I know not where the lost princess is now," he said. "I have her scarf and you dare not touch me or any thing it shields. I know this; so does Hawago. The Great Spirit of the Seminoles has decreed that the hand that touches it vengefully will shrink away and become as a withered leaf.

But I will not multiply words. Hawago is a great chief; he must respect the flaming shawl."

"He does respect it!" said the chief, quickly. "He knew Capta when she was a papoose on her mother's breast What does the pale boy demand?"

Frank Nesbit allowed a triumphant smile to flit over his face, and whispered words of encouragement to the beautiful captives.

"The lost girl's shawl protects the white captives," he said. "They must be set at liberty!"

A murmur of dissatisfaction ran from lip to lip, and Hawaga slowly shook his tufted head.

"They are my sisters," continued Nesbit, "and they must go free!"

Without replying Hawago turned to his warriors whom he addressed in a low whisper.

"They will not accede to your demand," Maggie Grant whispered to the youth. "They are concocting some cunning now."

"I scarcely hoped for success," he answered. "I have surprised myself. The Seminole has long regarded this scarf with superstitious veneration; he would not touch it for the world. I heard of it before the war began. Were Osceola here, I am sure that we would be set at liberty at once. It is the Indians' zeal to obey the great chief that makes them hesitate and hold a council now."

"Hawago is gaining some point," said Maumee glancing at the savages whose language she could but imperfectly understand. "Once free they shall never catch us again."

"No," said Nesbit, "never again!"

The Indian council terminated abruptly. Hawago shut his teeth behind a brief sentence, and turned to the fearful trio.

"Where does the white boy and his sisters want to go?" he asked.

"Look out, there's base treachery in the wind," whispered Maggie Grant before the youth could reply.

"I will," he whispered in return, and then looked at the chief.

"I wish to be left here. When the tread of the Seminoles

dies away in the woods, I will go. I will cross the red man's trail never again. Now that I have found my sisters, I will lift my arm against the Seminole no more."

"Will he tell Hawago where Capta is?" asked the chief eagerly."

"I do not know, I say. I saw her in a cabin in the forest; she is not there now."

"The trail that leads to Fort King is not far away. It crosses the river just beyond the opening which Hawago can almost see from here. He will conduct the white boy and his sisters to the trail, then he will turn his face from them. What does he say to this."

Frank Nesbit hesitated. He wanted to take the girls to Fort King, and he might not be able to find the trail if left alone where he stood. He was debating a mental question with the eyes of every Indian fastened upon him, when he heard Maggie Grant's voice at his shoulder.

"When Hawago turned to talk there were twelve Indians; there are but ten now."

He started, but did not exhibit any emotion to his foes.

"That desertion implies treachery," said the second girl. 'Let us remain here. I can find the Fort King trail."

The boy scout then spoke to the chief.

"We will remain here."

Hawago seemed disappointed.

"You may not find the trail."

"We may not want it."

"Then stay here, white boy!" cried the Indian exhibiting his old anger. "Cross not Hawago's path again. He will not spare for the shawl of Capta. Osceola may cleave his head for sparing to-night."

Then he spoke to his braves, and they vaulted upon the backs of their steeds.

"Pale-faces, good-by," said the chief. "It is a long trail that leads to the soldiers' fort. It bristles with knives and arrows."

He spoke with a malignance that caused the girls to shudder.

The next minute he was riding away with his head turned from the trio.

Without uttering a word, they listened to the dying hoof-sounds which at last they could not hear.

The stillness of the forest was about them, and fearing as it seemed to disturb it, they stood there moving not.

They were completely unarmed and this destitution of weapons was well calculated to breed alarm. With the fate of Old Crossfire enveloped in mystery, Frank Nesbit and the girls were wondering why somebody did not come.

"Why do we stand here?" suddenly asked Maumee.

The youth started and turned upon them.

"Yes, why?" he said. "This is an hour for action. We must go. I care not for the Fort King trail now. I believe the miscreants who have just left us will watch it. The stream of which Hawago spoke must be near."

"It is," answered Maggie Grant. "The cypress ford cannot be four miles away, and but two miles beyond the ford a company of soldiers are encamped."

"The soldiers so near?" exclaimed Nesbit.

"We saw them yesterday."

"We will go to the ford, then," he said. "Maggie, do you know the way?"

"I can lead you there."

"Thank Heaven! We will soon be out of this wilderness."

Then in silence and amid much caution the march for the cypress ford was taken up.

The rising moon showered her tropical light down through the branches, and covered much of the forest with a silvery sheen. It enabled the trio to avoid fallen trees and other places that might hurl them into danger; but they kept in the darkened places as much as possible.

Frank Nesbit walked beside the widow's daughter with whom he conversed in cautious whispers.

Maumee regarded them curiously and sighed more than once as she turned her head away.

Their journey through the forest was necessarily slow, and not until two hours had elapsed did they reach the vicinity of the cypress ford.

"The ford may be guarded," said the youth, when the shimmering water burst upon his vision.

"We have crossed it often," replied Maggie Grant. "We have never been disturbed here."

But the young scout concluded to examine the crossing, and leaving the girls where they had stopped, he went forward.

The stream was a tributary of the pretentious and beautiful Withlacooche, and a huge cypress that leaned over the ford had furnished the name of the spot.

The tree shaded the ford completely, and the river as well for some distance below. And silence also was a tenant of the spot, for the pellucid stream did not celebrate its movement with the faintest semblance of a song. Thus it had gained the repulsive title of the Dead river.

The long hanging boughs of the cypress almost touched the water in the center of the stream, and while the youth stood on the fringed bank he fancied that they moved.

There was no wind to stir them at that hour, and he was curious to satisfy his mind. He stepped into the water, and moved toward the spot.

His wading emitted no sounds.

He could not distinguish objects above him; but he could see the hanging branches between him and the sky.

Therefore, he did not see the dark figures in the tree over his head. He did not note the adjusting of a lariat and when he paused it was to turn back to the two girls.

But at that moment something struck his shoulders.

He started to threw up his hands to tear off the fatal coil for he instantly comprehended that a lariat was about him.

But in vain, for his arms were suddenly pinioned to his side, and he was jerked from the dead water—up into the darkness of the cypress.

His ascent occupied but a moment of time. A hand suddenly closed on his arm, and the scarf of Micanopy's daughter was snatched from his bosom.

"Shawl save pale boy no more," said a voice in the unmistakable tones of the Indian. "He pull out of the water like a fish."

A low chuckle from another person who had not spoken greeted the last sentence, and, his eyes becoming accus-

tomed to the darkness, the boy scout saw a knife clenched in a dark red hand.

He thought of the girls in the wood waiting for his return but he could not make up his mind to signal them and apprise them of the melancholy results of his reconnoissance.

CHAPTER XIV.

OSCEOLA.

BENEATH the boughs of a young magnolia whose white blossoms made the air redolent with perfume the two girls awaited Frank Nesbit's return. There came no sounds from the ford, and no footstep saluted their ears.

"I wonder what keeps him?" whispered Maumee. "The ford is near; he could have—"

"'Sh!" and the hand of Maggie Grant touched her cousin's arm.

The twain listened.

A stealthy step was approaching; but while they listened it suddenly ceased.

A ray of moonlight suddenly lighted the spot where the girls stood and with clasped hands they moved back into the gloom.

The silence was oppressive; they felt that some unseen person standing near was watching them—watching them for a death-shot or for captivity.

No sound from the ford. Where was the youth?

"Something has happened to him," said Maggie Grant, in the lowest of voices. "We must leave this spot, come captivity or death. After all, he may not have seen us."

She meant the producer of the noise that had startled them.

"Shall we leave him?"

"Yes. If he is in trouble, Maumee, we dare not aid him. He may have met foes at the ford. We owe him much; he has saved our lives but after all this, I could not give him —my hand."

Maumee looked reproachfully in the speaker's face and then said:

"Let us go."

They turned, but had not inaugurated a flight when a twig snapped, and there was a step behind them.

Turning quickly toward the ford again to divine the cause of the startling noise, they beheld an Indian standing in the moonlight. He seemed a statue, so motionless he stood with his arms folded upon his breast and his eyes fixed intently upon them. No weapons were visible about him; but the heron feathers that formed his head-dress proclaimed his rank and his name.

A glance at the motionless figure and the girls looked into each other's face.

"Osceola!" murmured Maggie Grant, and her companion nodded ascent.

The name of the great chief of the Seminoles still quivered the girl's lips when the statue moved and came directly toward the pair.

"Come!" said Maumee, seizing her cousin's hand.

"No, we cannot escape now, he is too near," was the reply, and almost breathless they waited for the Firebrand of the Everglades.

He came forward quickly and a puzzled expression was on his face.

"White girls get away from Hawago?" he said, but half-interrogatively, "Osceola never expected to see them alive when he left them in the hummock. What are they doing here?"

"We are fleeing from our foes," answered Maggie, firmly. "We have escaped from Hawago. Do not ask us how."

"Osceola will not question white girls. He came to the cypress to meet Hawago when the darkness flies from the forest. He could kill the girls who have trailed him long; but he never struck a person with long hair. The blue-coated soldiers hunt him like a wolf; he knows not where to run for they are always on his trail. He wages a useless war; but he will never rest his arm while it can strike the men who would drive him beyond the great river to a land

where people die like curs. Where would the white girls go ?"

"We were going up to the ford where the magnolias are," answered one of the girls."

"Then come," said the chief.

Startled at his words and his demeanor and looking into each other's eyes inquiringly, the girls started forward guided by the chief, the implacable foe of their race.

He led them through the forest until they beheld the shimmering waters of the little stream again.

A pair of magnolias growing side by side had given name to the ford that lay before them, and the stars told them that the night was far advanced, and that the glimmerings of dawn would soon illumine the horizon.

"White girls never see Osceola again," the chief said, looking sadly into their eyes. "They know now that he never strikes women—they can tell their people that the stories about women's blood on his tomahawk are lies. Beyond this water," and the chief stretched forth his hand, "lies the trail that leads to the white man's fort. You will go to it, and you will tell the general there that Osceola will not be the first to talk of peace. He was at Dade's bloody ground, he struck the soldiers there, he has scalped the big soldier, Thompson, and he is proud of it. Now the pale girls must go for Osceola must meet Hawago at the cypress ford.

He put forth his hands and for the first time in their lives the girl avengers touched the skin of the Seminole sachem.

They sympathized with him, who was but struggling for the land of his nativity, for the beautiful spot of his childhood against a nation young in years but a giant in strength.

Vain struggle it was, but how heroic!

The Seminole war is but the history of oppression unsuccessfully resisted. The foot of the government was on the Indian's neck, and he could not rise until it was removed. And when it was removed that he might stand erect, chains were on his strong limbs, and his manhood had been taken away.

I say the two girls pitied the hunted chief, whom they had trailed with ready rifle.

Emotion was overcoming him and when in silence he pointed for the second time across the river his arm trembled. He wanted the twain to depart.

They turned and stepped into the water. Osceola watched them, his arms folded, and his countenance thoughtful.

They were in the center of the stream when the crack of a rifle broke the profound calm, and a wild cry like a death-shriek followed.

It came from the neighborhood of the cypress ford.

The twain stopped and looked at Osceola.

He was listening, having, like them, been startled by the shot.

He saw them and motioned them away.

"Go!" they heard him say, and then he turned abruptly on his heel.

The stream was soon forded, and the cousins were in the wood on the right bank.

"I can not leave him now," said Maggie Grant. "That shot, that cry so full of mystery, must be solved. Listen! there are cries, shouts at the cypress ford! Blood is being shed down there, and, Maumee, it may be the blood of those we love."

"Then come!" said Maumee. "The wood is dense this side of the ford. We will go down. Would to Heaven that our rifles were here!"

The absence of weapons was truly deplorable; but the avengers could not be kept back. A battle was raging at the cypress ford; and hand in hand they hastened thither.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIGHT AT THE FORD.

THE reader will recollect that during Frank Nesbit's parley with Hawago, two Indians secretly but not unobserved left the Red Stick band.

Their departure was noticed by Maggie Grant, who warned the youth.

These two savages proceeded to the cypress ford, and hid themselves in the tree. The hands of one grasped a strong lariat, and the crimson fingers toyed eagerly with the easy noose. They conversed in low whispers listening the while for a sound.

At last voices reached their ears, the voices of three persons in conversation. The Indians exchanged ejaculations of satisfaction, and said one:

"The pale-faces come," and the lasso was for the twentieth time adjusted.

By and by a footstep approached the ford, and the fiery eyes looking down through the branches saw a youth enter the stream. He proceeded toward the opposite bank cautiously; but paused in the center of the stream, as if a suspicious sound had fallen upon his ears.

A moment later the lariat descended, and the youth was jerked from the water up into the tree.

The Indians chuckled devilishly over their success, and, with their captive, began to descend.

Frank Nesbit, for he was the prisoner, felt himself, unarmed as he was, in a perilous situation. The savages were bent on destroying him; but they would first find the girls whom they knew were with him. To their questions concerning the fair avengers' whereabouts, he returned evasive replies, and talked in a loud tone hoping that it might prove a warning to his friends.

At the foot of the cypress one of the Indians left the captive with his companion, while he scoured the woods for the

white girls. But the birds had flown, and, dispirited and angry, the savage returned.

"Girls gone!" he said darting a fierce look at the youth.

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Nesbit. "Their pure blood will not redden your accursed steel."

The Indian sprung upon the youth with glittering knife; but the arm of the second Red Stick interfered.

"The captive must die before Hawago!" said he. "The chief is to meet Osceola here ere long."

But the blood of the maddened Indian could not be cooled by words; and his comrade drew his knife to protect the boy.

"Cut my bonds and give me a knife!" cried Frank looking up at his protector. "I'll fight him on an equality, and continue your captive if I win."

But the Indian shook his head. He was not going to trust the young scout with a knife in his hands.

Like maddened tigers, the two braves faced each other, neither willing to yield a single point.

It was a tableau seldom witnessed in the land of the everglades.

"Give me the boy!" suddenly cried the brave who had lariated the scout.

"He shall die before Hawago!" was the uncompromising reply.

Again the knife was raised; but steel as firm and as true encountered it.

All at once there was a sound in the forest.

The knives were lowered.

"Hawago!" ejaculated one of the pair, but the other said:

"Morello comes!"

The next moment the report of a rifle emanating from the bosom of the river, cleft the air, and one of the contending braves dropped his knife and started back with a groan.

A few feet from the foot of the cypress he fell dead.

The remaining Indian with his captive turned to the stream and saw a boat shoot across a streak of moonlight toward the bank. In the center of the boat a girlish figure seemed to be loading a rifle.

The Indian started and raised his own weapon; but before

he could sight the slayer the boat was in the shadows and no longer visible.

"Come!" he cried, grasping the young captive's hand.

The boy was reluctant to flee; he felt that friends were at hand, and the Indian was about to drag him off by main strength when a number of Indians sprung to the scene.

The captor gave a joyous yell. Hawago had come!

He seized Frank Nesbit and drew him toward him with fiendish glee.

"Pretty shawl not save white boy now!" he said. "He never get away from Hawago again. Where pale girls?"

"Safe!" cried the boy. "You can never find them."

The chief uttered a cry of rage, and the ejaculations of disappointment that fell from his Indian lips were suddenly drowned by the reports of half a dozen rifles and the furious charge of a mounted foe.

Hawago turned, sorely wounded, upon the attacking party and his men poured a volley into their ranks. The dark faces of several maroons were visible in the terrible conflict that followed at the ford, and the six swept every thing before them.

The Indians recognizing their foes, fought like demons, and all at once a tall figure sprung from the river bank and threw himself into the melee.

He was a handsome man, and his long hair, and piercing eyes, his daring and strength, proclaimed him the master spirit of the Seminole war—Osceola.

He reached the battle-field when Hawago's band had been reduced to three.

But four of the enemy remained, three maroons and one Indian, and before the chief could strike, Hawago, stricken by a bullet fired from the bush, fell against the cypress, thence into the river, already stained with gore.

That shot from the bush started Osceola. He seemed to recognize the crack of that fatal rifle — Capta's deadly weapon.

"No more!" he cried, springing from the conflict. "Osceola will not fight against *her*."

He fled before an arm could arrest his progress, and the sole survivor of his little band.

Several moments later his voice came from the depths of the magnolia forest.

"Osceola will never leave the war-trail while a white man or a Mixed Rider lives! His voice is still for war! The hand of every man is against him; his hand against every man!"

In silence the maroons and their red companion listened to the red king's words. They knew that he would keep his faith—that he would never submit to the humiliating overtures of the government.

The battle was over, and one of the black victors started toward the sole spectator of the bloody fray—Frank Nesbit. Bound and lying near the cypress, the young scout had witnessed the battle.

"Hunter's companion," said the black. "Kill 'im?"

"No," said another maroon, interfering. "Take him to chief. Mebbe he tell chief about the pale girls."

This suggestion found favor with the rest of the party, and awhile later Frank Nesbit found himself conducted from the stream.

The bodies of the slain were left on the field of battle, and the victors did not see the dark figure that crept through the brush upon their trail.

It was the figure of a girl who trailed a rifle at her side, and her face looked very like the face of Capta, Micanopy's lost child, and the owner of the talismanic shawl.

She watched the maroons with keen eye, and kept her finger very near the trigger of her rifle.

A mile from the stream the victors halted, and a bird-call broke the silence.

The cry was answered some distance to the right, and the band turned aside and crept cautiously forward.

Presently they came to a creek far beneath the overhanging banks of which they found a fire.

And in the ruddy light, shielded from the water by several blankets, lay two prominent characters of our story.

With his head bandaged and the fixed look of early dissolution in his eyes, Morello the handsome chief of the Mixed Riders reclined on a blanket. Beside him lay Pascal Jardin, the creole, suffering from his burns and wound.

The chief's eyes lit up when he saw the maroons approach, but he sighed when he feebly counted their numbers.

Of his terrible band but three remained.

"Morello is dying," he said. "He has fought his last fight; he—ha! the white boy!" and at sight of Frank Nesbit the Mixed Rider almost started up. For a moment he stared into the boy's face then cried:

"Boy, where are the girls?"

"I do not know."

"Morello must see the Hidden Rose before he goes! He loves her; she has loved him. She has trailed him through the forest that she might save him from the bullet that found his head at last. Boy, now that he can not build a house for her, he gives her to you. She loved you before she saw Morello. Pale boy, she belongs to you."

Morello put forth his cold hand, and Nesbit grasped it.

"Tell the Hidden Rose that Morello kissed your hand for her cheek before he died," the Mixed Rider continued. "Listen, boy! The soldiers have hunted Morello; they hunt him still. They think that he has struck their people. He never struck a pale-face in all his life. His hands have been against the Seminoles—against Osceola. The white trapper, your friend, and you have hunted him believing that he slew Bertie Wilson and the Hidden Rose's mother. The Red Sticks did those deeds. Where is the big hunter?"

The maroons exchanged glances which their chief saw.

"Have you punished him for shooting Morello?" he asked.

"He is punished."

"Does he still live? The truth! the truth! Morello will have the truth."

"He may live. *We lashed him to a horse. Shot the horse in the river and left him alive to the alligators.*"

Frank Nesbit and Pascal Jardin shuddered.

"He must not die!" said Morello. "Morello forgives. Save him!" and he tried to rise. "Ride to the river and tear the hunter from the jaws of the lagoon devils."

One of the maroons turned, as Morello fell back with a groan.

The planter, despite his pain, sprung to his side.

The beautiful eyes stared vacantly around for a moment, then settled on Frank Nesbit.

"Love the Hidden Rose," he said. "For—Morello—says—"

A gasp, a dropping of the handsome head so beautifully ornamented by hair that Absalom would have coveted, and a bursting of blood from the mouth!

"Dead!" ejaculated Pascal Jardin.

But no! the eyes opened again, and the lips parted:

"Go! save the hunter."

Then Morello fell back—dead! His last words were for the salvation of his slayer.

Few such men as this character of the everglade war have lived.

The maroons turned.

"He shall be saved!" cried one, and the next minute but two blacks stood over their dead chief.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER STORMS—CALMS.

In the middle of one of the numerous alligator infested rivers of Florida a thrilling occurrence took place one beautiful night in 1836.

The head and shoulders of a man appeared just above the waters, and all about him could be seen the repulsive backs and jaws of the Southern saurians. It was evident that the man so completely at the mercy of the alligators had been left to perish thus terribly and miserably by enemies, for he could not rise. Some great weight seemed to hold him down.

This weight was the dead body of a black horse whose ears protruded above the water not far from the victim's head.

The saurians would approach and retreat much after the

manner of a cat when the mouse is completely in her power They seemed to take a delight in torturing the man with thoughts of the horrible death to which he was doomed.

He watched the monsters without a word; not one of their movements escaped him. By and by they seemed to say: "Let us put an end to this truce. Let us devour our victim."

From all sides they advanced to the repast. The man could not retreat; his limbs bound to the dead horse, held him captive. The jaws of death opened all around him. The monsters were already snapping at him, and the ears of the black horse had disappeared when the thundering tramp of hoofs was heard.

A horse was coming down the bank with the speed of the wind!

The imperiled man ejaculated the name of his Maker and shouted. He saw a horse on the bank, and a man whom he took to be an Indian sat astride of him.

All this for a moment, for the animal leaped into the river and dashed toward him. Then the alligators retreated and the rider who was a black man, leaned over the paleface with glittering knife. The blade disappeared beneath the water.

A moment later the horse's head was turned toward the bank again; he bore two riders!

Sam Thatcher was saved!

One evening a company of soldiers entered Fort King.

Among them walked Pascal Jardin, Frank Nesbit and Old Crossfire.

Within the walls of the fort two beautiful girls encountered them, and the young scout told one the story of Morello's death.

She turned away and he left her weeping.

"By Tampa!" exclaimed Crossfire. "I followed the wrong man. He was too good to live for he forgave me for shooting 'im. If I hed been Morello I'd left Sam Thatcher to the alligators."

Months rapidly passed away.

Osceola, basely betrayed, was dying in Fort Moultrie.

The United States, by disgraceful treachery, was sending the noblest red-man of America to a detested grave.

Old Crossfire still hunted the slayers of Bertie Wilson—the Red Sticks, and Pascal Jardin was loving Maumee as his wife.

Our youthful hero Frank Nesbit secured the hand of Maggie Grant, one of the masked night riders, while Capta the Indian princess, hearing that her persecuting lover was dead, returned to her father.

She loved the young scout; but fortune had given him to the first love of his heart.

Thus we have followed to the end the long trails of the everglades, and from mystery, hatred, and revenge plucked the gems of light, love, and forgiveness.

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The world is what we make it. Two girls.
The old and the new. For gentleman and lady.

DIME DIALOGUES No. 17.

LITTLE FOLKS' SPEECHES AND DIALOGUES.

To be happy you must be good. For two little girls and one boy.
Evanescent glory. For a bevy of boys.
The little peacemaker. For two little girls.
What parts friends. For two little girls.
Martha Washington tea party. For five little girls in old-time costume.
The evil there is in it. For two young boys.
Wise and foolish little girl. For two girls.
A child's inquiries. For small child and teacher.
The cooking club. For two girls and others.
How to do it. For two boys.
A hundred years to come. For boy and girl.
Don't trust faces. For several small boys.
Above the skies. For two small girls.
The true heroism. For three little boys.
Give us little boys a chance; The story of the plum pudding; I'll be a man; A little girl's rights speech; Johnny's opinion of grandmothers; The boasting hen; He knows der rest; A small boy's view of corns; Robby's sermon; Nobody's child; Nutting at grandpa Gray's; Little boy's view of how Columbus discovered America; Little girl's view; Little boy's speech on time; A little boy's pocket; The midnight murder; Robby Rob's second sermon; How the baby came; A boy's observations; The new slate; A mother's love; The creowuin' glory; Baby Lulu; Josh Billings on the bumble-bee, wren, alligater; Died yesterday; The chicken's mistake; The heir apparent; Deliver us from evil; Don't want to be good; Only a drunken fellow; The two little robins; Be slow to condemn; A nonsense tale; Little boy's declamation; A child's desire; Bogus; The goblin cat; Rub-a-dub; Calumny; Little chatterbox; Where are they; A boy's view; The twenty frogs; Going to school; A morning bath; The girl of Dundee; A fancy; In the sunlight; The new laid egg; The little musician; Idle Ben; Pottery-man; Then and now.

DIME DIALOGUES No. 18.

[illegible]y wishes. For several characters.
[illegible]ose without a thorn. 2 males and 1 female.
[illegible] greedy by half. For three males.
[illegible]e good turn deserves another. For 6 ladies.
Courting Melinda. For 3 boys and 1 lady.
The new scholar. For several boys.
The little intercessor. For four ladies.
Antecedents. For 3 gentlemen and 3 ladies.
Give a dog a bad name. For four gentlemen.
Spring-time wishes. For six little girls.
Lost Charlie; or, the gipsy's revenge. Numerous characters.
A little tramp. For three little boys.
Hard times. For 2 gentlemen and 4 ladies.
The lesson well worth learning. For two males and two females.

DIME DIALOGUES, NO. 19.

An awful mystery. Two females and two males.
Contentment. For five little boys.
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California uncle. Three males and three females.
Be kind to the poor. A little folks' play.
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Mayor. Acting charade. For four characters.
The smoke fiend. For four boys.
A kindergarten dialogue. For a Christmas Festival. Personated by seven characters.
The use of study. For three girls.
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Remember Benson. For three males.
Modern education. Three males and one female.
Mad with too much lore. For three males.
The fairy's warning. Dress piece. For two girls.
Aunt Eunice's experiment. For several.
The mysterious G G. Two females and one male.
We'll have to mortgage the farm. For one male and two females.
An old fashioned dust.
The auction. For numerous characters.

DIME DIALOGUES, No. 20.

The wrong man. Three males and three females
Afternoon calls. For two little girls.
Ned's present. For four boys.
Judge not. For teacher and several scholars.
Telling dreams. For four little folks.
Saved by love. For two boys.
Mistaken identity. Two males and three females.
Couldn't read English. For 3 males and 1 female.
A little Vesuvius. For six little girls.
"Sold." For three boys.
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City manners and country hearts. For three girls and one boy.
The silly dispute. For two girls and teacher.
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Mark Hastings' return. For four males.
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The double stratagem. For four females.
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The equality of man,
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The fruits of the war,
The sewing-machine,
True manhood,
The mystery of life,
Ups and downs,
The truly great,
Early retiring and ris'g,
A. Ward's oration,
True nationality,
Our natal day,
Solferino,
Intelligence the basis of liberty,
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Charge of light brigade,
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